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INTRODUCTION TO THE  
LIFE OF CHRIST



# INTRODUCTION TO THE LIFE OF CHRIST

BY

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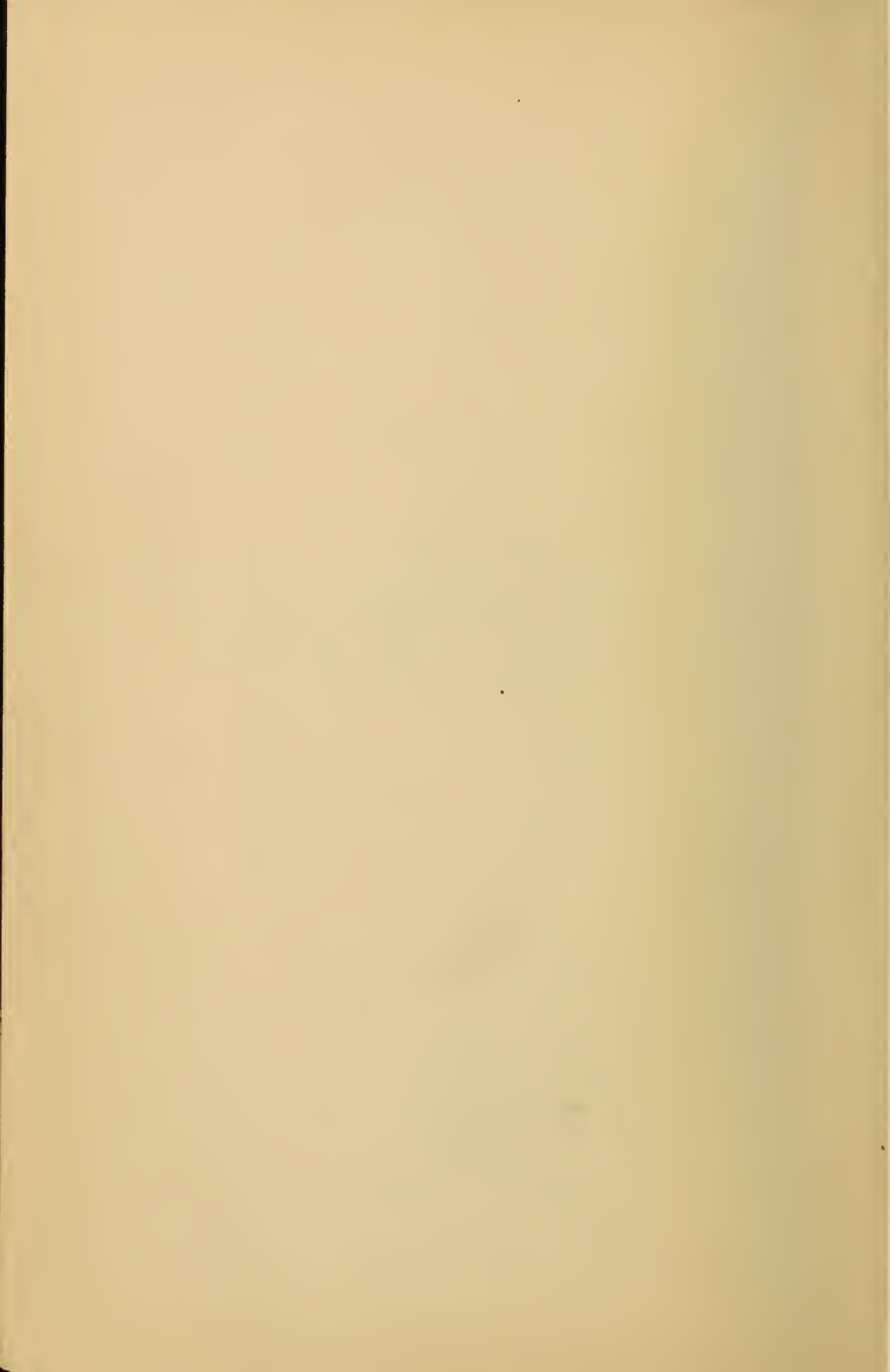
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Vol 1

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TO  
E. W. H.  
WHOSE DEEP AND REVERENT INTEREST  
IN ALL THAT RELATES TO THE LIFE OF CHRIST  
HAS BEEN AN INSPIRATION



## PREFACE

THIS book was written for my own college classes to aid them in gaining the preliminary information necessary for an intelligent study of the life of Christ. It deals with a variety of topics, all bearing upon the one important question, What are the sources from which we gain a knowledge of that life, and how far are they trustworthy?

There is no lack of literature upon this question; indeed, the very abundance of information and discussion is the chief difficulty for a beginner. Many of the books are minute and learned treatises suited only for the specialist. Others are written to defend special theories, and presuppose a general knowledge of the subject. Most of them deal with but one or a few of all the topics to be considered. The only book with which I am acquainted that covers much of the field in a brief, simple, uncontroversial way is Anthony's "Introduction to the Life of Jesus"; but this does not treat of the text or the canon, and was published in 1896, since which time new and valuable contributions have been made to our knowledge.

I have endeavored to present in a clear and concise manner the facts which should be borne in mind as the Four Gospels are studied, and the problems—as yet only partly solved—which these Gospels present. With no theories of my own to advocate, I have aimed

to make possible a comprehension of theories presented by scholars of various schools. And while I have frankly stated my own conviction that a searching criticism of the Gospels only reveals more clearly their essential trustworthiness, I hope I have treated with fairness and full appreciation those writers who maintain the contrary.

A few years ago I prepared a "Guide to the Lives of Christ for English Readers." Its purpose was to give a general view of the course of modern thought concerning the life of Christ, and especially a brief description of each of the more important Lives, written in English or accessible in translation. The need of some such guide for the inexperienced student is evident, when one realizes how many Lives of Christ, written from various stand-points and differing greatly in scholarship, are presented for his choice. This work is now out of print; so I have added it, somewhat condensed and brought down to date, as an Appendix to the present volume.

If this book shall furnish to my students an introduction to the broad and fascinating fields of Gospel criticism, I shall be satisfied. If it shall be of service to others who may wish to know what these fields contain, I shall be greatly pleased.

W. B. H.

VASSAR COLLEGE, *May*, 1911.



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# INTRODUCTION TO THE LIFE OF CHRIST

## CHAPTER I

### HEATHEN AND JEWISH WRITINGS

IN studying the life of Christ, as in studying any other chapter of history, we must begin by considering what are the sources from which we gain our information, and to what degree are they trustworthy. Evidently the Four Gospels of the New Testament are the chief source, and questions that bear upon their trustworthiness are of supreme importance. But the life of Christ is of such vital interest to the world that every possible source of knowledge is eagerly examined to see both what additional facts it may give us, and in what way it may confirm or disprove the facts given in the gospels.

We turn first to heathen writers. Jesus lived in a century when able historians were ready to record anything of importance that happened in the realm of the Cæsars. And certainly they could select no subject more important and more sure to make their writings immortal than the deeds and words of Him from whose birth we now date the reigns of the Cæsars. If Christ

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really lived, and was what the evangelists report, shall we not find some account of him by Roman historians?

Two facts make such a supposition improbable. The first is that very little has come down to us from those historians who lived in the days of Christ and wrote the history of their own times. Indeed, with the exception of the writings of Tacitus and Suetonius, all Roman history of the first century that can in any sense be called contemporaneous has disappeared. And the second fact is that no Roman historian would think it worth while to write about Jesus of Nazareth. Though Judea was a province of the Roman Empire, it was a petty one in a remote corner; and its people were regarded with contempt or aversion. Their stubborn, rebellious character often brought them to the attention of the emperor; but that attention was devoted to the task of holding them in subjection. As for Jesus, the historian would have smiled at the thought of devoting even a paragraph to him. His ministry was very brief; his work was mainly among the common people—peasants and fishermen; his miracles were easily confounded with the mass of imposture in which the age abounded; and above all, the refusal of his own nation to accept him as its leader, and his ignominious death, seemed abundant proof that he was beneath consideration. For a Roman historian of the first century to record the career of Jesus was as unlikely as it would be for a Russian historian of to-day

to record the career of some brief leader of a little band of fanatics in the obscure regions of Daghestan.

The only place, therefore, where we might find a notice of Jesus in heathen history, is in the pages of Tacitus or Suetonius; and the only possibility is of some incidental mention of him. Such mention we do find. Tacitus, who ranks as one of the greatest of Roman historians, wrote his annals not long after A. D. 100. In this work (XV, 44), when telling how Nero was suspected of having set fire to Rome in A. D. 64, he writes as follows:

“In order to suppress the rumor, Nero falsely accused and punished with the most acute tortures persons who, already hated for their shameful deeds, were commonly called Christians. The founder of that name, Christus, had been put to death by the procurator, Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius; but the deadly superstition, though repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where this evil had its origin, but also through the city [Rome] whither all things horrible and vile flow from all quarters and are encouraged. Accordingly, first those were arrested who confessed; then on their information a great multitude were convicted not so much of the crime of incendiarism as of hatred of the human race.”

Suetonius was a contemporary of Tacitus, but an historian of much less ability. In his lives of the twelve Cæsars (Claud. 25) he says:

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“He [Claudius] expelled from Rome the Jews, because they were constantly raising a tumult at the instigation of Chrestus.”

The expulsion is the one referred to in Acts 18:2, and took place probably about A. D. 50. We know nothing more about it. Possibly the Jews quarrelled over the claims of Christ, and Suetonius—confusing the strange name Christus with the familiar Greek adjective Chrestos, often used as a proper name—supposed the person who bore it to have been in Rome when the quarrel broke out.

One further mention of Christ, though not by an historian, is worth quoting. Pliny the Younger was governor of Bithynia, in Asia Minor, about A. D. 112; and he wrote a letter (Epistles X, 97) to the emperor, Trajan, telling what he had learned about the Christians in his province, and asking how he should deal with them. The letter is most valuable as a picture of Christian life at the beginning of the second century; but for our present purpose we need only note that many of the Christians were ready to undergo torture rather than renounce Christ, and that those who did renounce him made the following statement:

“They affirmed that the sum of their guilt or error was to assemble on a fixed day before daybreak, and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves with an oath not to enter into any



wickedness or commit thefts, robberies, or adulteries, or falsify their work, or repudiate trusts committed to them: when these things were ended it was their custom to depart, and, on coming together again" (probably in the evening for the love-feast), "to take food, men and women together, yet innocently."

The statements of these three writers are practically all that is of value in heathen literature concerning Christ. They wrote fully three quarters of a century after his death, but Tacitus and Suetonius doubtless gained their information from earlier documents. They state but little, yet that little is enough to give Jesus a place in secular history. From it alone we should know that he lived in Judea in the reign of Tiberius, that he was put to death by Pontius Pilate, that he founded a sect which continued after his death, and that his followers in later days worshipped him as a god, and were willing to endure torture rather than renounce their faith.

Turning next to possible Jewish sources, we find that they are few in number. Philo was the ablest Jewish writer of the first century, and was a contemporary of Jesus; but he lived in Alexandria, his interests were philosophical, and there was no special reason why he should mention Jesus in any of his writings that are preserved. We are not surprised to find that he is silent about him; indeed, he probably knew little or nothing about the Christians.

Josephus, who was born A. D. 37 or 38, and died after A. D. 100, is the one Jewish writer who might be expected to tell about Jesus; for he spent his early life in Jerusalem, where he must have known the Christians; and his greatest historical work, "Jewish Antiquities," tells the story of his nation from its beginning to the outbreak of the rebellion against the Romans, in A. D. 66, thus including the period when Jesus labored and died. But we must bear in mind two facts about Josephus—he wrote after the fall of Jerusalem, when the feeling of the Jews against the Christians was bitter, and he wrote to laud his nation to the Romans, who considered the Christians a despicable and pestilential sect. There was little likelihood, therefore, that he would mention Jesus, if he could avoid it, or say anything good of him if he did mention him.

In this connection it is instructive to notice what Josephus has to say about John the Baptist (Ant. 18 : 5 : 2):

"Herod slew him [John] who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness toward one another, and piety toward God, and so to come to baptism, for that the baptism would be acceptable to him if they made use of it, not in order to put away some sins, but for the purification of the body—supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now, when others came in crowds about him, for they were



greatly moved by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion—for they seemed to act in all things according to his advice—thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause.”

The omission of the fact that John preached the immediate coming of the Messiah leaves the excitement caused by his preaching wholly unexplained. Possibly Josephus omitted it because any allusion to Messianic expectations would arouse Roman suspicions; but more probably he felt that by mentioning it he would be put in the same dilemma in which the chief priests were put by Jesus when he questioned them about John (Matt. 21 : 25).

In Ant. 20 : 9 : 1 Josephus tells how Ananus, the high-priest, about the year A. D. 62, caused several persons to be stoned to death, one of whom was James, “the brother of Jesus, who was called the Christ.” This mention of Jesus and his claims, if genuine (and the argument to the contrary is not strong), is the more emphatic because it is purely incidental. Almost in spite of himself Josephus has brought Jesus into his narrative.

The fullest notice of Jesus is in Ant. 18 : 3 : 3, as follows:

“Now about this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one should call him a man; for he was a worker

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of miracles, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with joy. And he drew to himself many of the Jews, and also many of the Greeks. This was the Christ. And when at the instigation of our chief men Pilate had sentenced him to the cross, those who had loved him at the first did not fall away. For he appeared unto them alive again on the third day, as the holy prophets had declared these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And even now the race of Christians called after him is not extinct."

If this passage were genuine, Josephus would be a most clear witness to Christ; but unquestionably it is not genuine—no Jew who rejected Jesus could write it. It is found in all existing manuscripts, but none of these are early; and Origen, who died about A. D. 253, evidently did not have it in his manuscript, for he says expressly that Josephus did not believe that Jesus was the Christ. How the passage originated, we can only surmise. Josephus was a favorite author in Christian circles in early days as well as later. It is possible therefore, that when they found in his book no account of Christ, they inserted this passage to supply the deficiency. Or it is possible that Josephus did give some slurring account of Christ, which Christian copyists changed, as they certainly would, to a favorable one. In support of this latter possibility we notice that in the section immediately following, Josephus tells a story that has no connection whatever with his narrative,

unless he had cast a slur on the divine birth of Christ, and wished to suggest a parallel to it. But whatever the origin of this famous passage, it is of no value as contemporaneous Jewish testimony.

One more Jewish work should be examined, and that is the Talmud. The name means a "teaching" or "inference," and is the general term for a huge collection of works upon the traditional law, *i. e.*, the law which was developed by the scribes and handed down orally, as distinguished from the written law found in the Old Testament. It consists of two main divisions—the Mishna, containing these traditional laws, and the Gemara, containing discussions, interpretations, illustrations, etc., of the Mishna. It is a vast storehouse of all sorts of things, ranging from sayings that remind us of teachings of Jesus down to those that are the dreariest of rubbish. Edersheim says: "If we imagine something combining law reports, a Rabbinical Hansard, and notes of a theological debating club,—all thoroughly Oriental, full of digressions, anecdotes, quaint sayings, fancies, legends, and too often of what, from its profanity, superstition, and even obscenity could scarcely be quoted—we may form some general idea of what the Talmud is." ("Life of Jesus," 1 : 13.) The Talmud is the product of centuries; and the Mishna probably was not put into writing until at least the end of the second Christian century, while the Gemara, of which we have two forms (the Jerusa-

lem and the Babylon), is two and three centuries later.

In the Talmud are only a few allusions to Christ, and these exhibit great prejudice and hatred. According to them, Jesus was born of adultery, learned magic in Egypt, led the people into sin, was entrapped by witnesses, tried, kept for forty days that a witness might appear in his favor, and then—when none appeared—was stoned and afterward hanged, and in Gehenna was plunged in boiling filth. Evidently the Talmud is worthless as a source for the life of Christ; and its statements are valuable only as showing the later feeling of the Jews toward the founder of the hated Christian sect.

## CHAPTER II

### CHRISTIAN WRITINGS OTHER THAN GOSPELS

FROM heathen and Jewish sources, which give us so little, we turn to the more promising Christian sources. And before considering the various gospels, we examine other early writings in search of any possible mention of Jesus.

#### *I. New Testament Books*

In the New Testament, besides the Four Gospels, we have twenty-three other books, all of which were written in the first century or, at the latest, early in the second century. Whatever they tell us about Jesus is, therefore, of high value as coming from the age of the apostles or of men who could personally have known the apostles.

The first interesting fact about them is that they give us very little about Jesus in addition to what is in the Four Gospels. We find one new and beautiful saying of his, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20 : 35); and, if the shorter form of Luke's account of the institution of the Lord's Supper be correct, then in I Cor. 11 : 24 we have for the first time the words, "This do in remembrance of Me." In I



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Thess. 4 : 15-17 there seems to be the substance of some teaching of Jesus about his second coming. In I Cor. 15 : 5-8 we have a list of his resurrection appearances, more complete than that in the gospels, while Acts 1 : 1-14 gives the fullest account we have of his ascension and his instructions preceding it. These few sayings and facts, all given by Paul or Luke, comprise practically the only additional information in the New Testament. It seems strange that there should be no more. Of course the epistles were written to readers who already had been instructed in the facts of the Christian faith (I Cor. 11 : 23, 15 : 3; II Thess. 2 : 5, *et al.*). So there was no need of rehearsing these facts. Moreover, the intense realization of a present, unseen Christ, and the earnest expectation of his speedy coming again in the flesh, made all Christians less disposed to dwell upon the historical past. Yet the epistles are full of allusions to the recorded facts of Christ's earthly years; and since there must have been many facts told by the witnesses besides those preserved in the gospels (*cf.* John 20 : 30), it is remarkable that such facts are ignored.

The second interesting fact about these New Testament books is that when we bring together their scattered allusions to incidents in the life of Christ, we have a mass of information from which we can frame a fairly complete outline of that life. And if this is done (see Gilbert, "Life of Jesus," 402) we find that the outline

agrees perfectly with the history given us in the Four Gospels. This should be borne in mind when sceptics try to prove that our gospels are a late invention, full of legendary matter. Here is another record of the life of Christ—a “gospel outside the gospels”—which would still remain, if the Four Gospels were wholly set aside.

It is true that some of these New Testament books are of disputed date and origin, so that sceptics may bring the same charge of late invention against them as against the gospels. But there are four great epistles—viz., I and II Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans—which practically all critics agree were written by Paul and before A. D. 60. Whether Paul ever met Jesus before the crucifixion is doubtful; but he was in Jerusalem soon afterward; he became a Christian within a few years; and he had every opportunity to learn about him. Natural curiosity, the hatred of a persecutor, the perplexities of an inquirer, the glowing love of a convert, and the increasing responsibilities of a teacher, would make Paul eager to learn all that he could—the more so because it was his practice, like that of the other apostles, to begin missionary work in any new field by telling the story of Jesus, especially of his crucifixion and resurrection (See I Cor. 15 : 1–9. *Cf.* Acts 13 : 16–41).

What, then, can we gather from Paul's four undisputed letters? We must not expect too much. They are written to Christians who already know the story

of Jesus, having learned it—most of them—from Paul himself. Whatever he says about that story will be by way of allusion and not of narration; and silence on any point will be no proof of ignorance unless there is imperative need of allusion. In simply this incidental way we learn that Paul knows (to give only one reference for each fact):

The birth of Jesus under the law (Gal. 4 : 4), of the seed of David after the flesh, but the Son of God and the Messiah (Rom. I : 1-4).

The public ministry, with its limitation to the Jews (Rom. 15 : 8); its humiliation (II Cor. 8 : 9); its band of apostles, whom Paul calls by the early name of the twelve (I Cor. 15 : 5), and the miracles which were wrought by them (II Cor. 12 : 12).

The teachings of Jesus, which Paul had evidently taken pains to learn exactly and which he treats as authoritative (I Cor. 7 : 10), distinguishing carefully between them and his own opinions (I Cor. 7 : 25).

The character of Jesus, as the ideal of wisdom (I Cor. 1 : 30); truth (Rom. 9 : 1); self-sacrificing service (Rom. 15 : 1-3); gentleness and sweet reasonableness (II Cor. 10 : 1), and love (Gal. 2 : 20).

The details of the Last Supper, which Paul gives more exactly than the synoptists (I Cor. 11 : 23-25); the attitude of the rulers (I Cor. 2 : 8); the betrayal (I Cor. 11 : 23); the crucifixion (II Cor. 13 : 4); the burial and resurrection on the third day (I Cor. 15 : 4).



The appearances to the disciples after the resurrection, of which there is given a fuller list than by the evangelists (I Cor. 15 : 5-8).

These references—which might be increased—show that the earthly life of Jesus was well known by both Paul and his readers; indeed, such incidental references are more suggestive than fuller statements would be, for they presuppose a larger acquaintance with the facts in order to make them intelligible. And not only do the facts thus indicated agree perfectly with the gospel story, but Paul's whole conception of Jesus harmonizes with that presented by the evangelists. Keim sums up the matter by saying: "The life of Jesus, as presented to us by Paul, is indeed rich in material—a gospel of the first days—and one which, in spite of its insoluble difficulties, would enable us to dispense with any further gospel; or rather, one which promises illustration and assistance of every kind to our gospels."

## II. *The Apostolic Fathers*

The term Apostolic Fathers is used to designate the earliest Christian writers whose works are not in the New Testament. They all wrote before A. D. 150, and might be considered in a general way as pupils of the apostles. "They were good men rather than great men, and excelled more in zeal and devotion to Christ than in literary attainments" (Schaff); and while their

writings were often read in the early church, and some of them are found in the same manuscripts with the New Testament books, we feel that it was a sound instinct which finally set them aside as uninspired. Indeed, one proof of the inspiration of the New Testament is the marked contrast in spiritual elevation, wisdom, and power, between its books and those of the Apostolic Fathers. Their writings, of which few have been preserved, were simple, earnest Christian messages to readers whose faith in Christ was already established. The only exception is Justin Martyr, who belongs to this period, but whose able defence of Christianity entitles him to be ranked more properly as first of the Apologists who in the next half century wrote long and powerful replies to heathen assailants of the faith.

While the Apostolic Fathers, especially Justin Martyr, tell much about the life of Christ, they tell almost nothing in addition to what is in the gospels. Justin Martyr says that he was born in a cave, that his work as a "carpenter" was to make yokes and ploughs, and that the Jews when mocking him set him on the judgment seat and said, "Judge us"—all of which seems credible. He also says that as Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, "When he stepped into the water, a fire was kindled in the Jordan," which adds to the scene a theophany similar to those described in the Old Testament. There are, also, in the Apostolic Fathers and

still later writers, a few sayings attributed to Jesus which are not found in the gospels, and which—from that fact—are often designated as the *Agrapha*, *i. e.*, unwritten. None of them can compare in beauty or importance with Acts 20 : 35. The following are a sample:

“They who wish to behold me and lay hold on my kingdom, must receive me by affliction and suffering.”

“Be approved money-changers; disapproving some things, but holding fast to that which is good.”

“In whatsoever things I may find you, in these shall I also judge you.”

“Ask for the great things, and the small shall be added unto you; ask for the heavenly things, and the earthly shall be added unto you.”

“Never rejoice except when ye have looked upon your brother in love.”

“He that wonders shall reign, and he that reigns shall rest.”

It is doubtful whether any of these sayings are genuine, though the best of them may contain some reminiscence of Christ's teaching.

In this connection it is worth while to notice the newly discovered sayings of Jesus which Grenfell and Hunt unearthed at the site of Oxyrhynchus, in lower Egypt, in 1897 and 1903. The first to be discovered were on a single leaf of papyrus, somewhat broken and illegible and beginning with the middle of a say-

ing continued from a previous leaf. They were as follows:

“. . . and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.”

“Jesus saith, Except ye fast to the world, ye shall in no wise find the Kingdom of God; and except ye keep the Sabbath, ye shall not see the Father.”

“Jesus saith, I stood in the midst of the world, and in the flesh was I seen of them; and I found all men drunken, and none found I athirst among them; and my soul grieveth over the sons of men because they are blind in heart. . . .”

“Jesus saith, Wherever there are . . . and there is one . . . alone, I am with him. Raise the stone and there thou shalt find me; cleave the wood, and there am I.”

“Jesus saith, A prophet is not acceptable in his own country, neither does a physician work cures upon them that know him.”

“Jesus saith, A city built upon the top of a high hill and established can neither fall nor be hid.”

The later discoveries were on the back of a survey-list of various pieces of land, and have suffered still greater mutilation. Grenfell and Hunt give the following translation of them, with their own conjectural restoration of parts of the missing text indicated by brackets:

“These are the [wonderful] words which Jesus the living [Lord] spake to . . . and Thomas; and he said

unto [them], Every one that hearkens to these words shall never taste of death."

"Jesus saith, Let not him who seeks . . . cease until he finds, and when he finds he shall be astonished, and astonished he shall reach the kingdom, and having reached the kingdom he shall rest."

"Jesus saith [Ye ask? who are those] that draw us [to the kingdom, if] the kingdom is in heaven? . . . the fowls of the air, and all beasts that are under the earth or upon the earth, and the fishes of the sea [these are they which draw] you, and the Kingdom of Heaven is within you, and whosoever shall know himself shall find it. [Strive therefore?] to know yourselves, and ye shall be aware that ye are the sons of the [almighty?] [Father,] [and] ye shall know that ye are in [the city of God?], and ye are [the city]."

"Jesus saith, A man shall not hesitate . . . to ask . . . concerning his place [in the kingdom. Ye shall know] that many that are first shall be last, and the last first and [they shall have eternal life?]."

"Jesus saith, Everything that is not before thy face, and that which is hidden from thee, shall be revealed to thee. For there is nothing hidden which shall not be made manifest; nor buried which shall not be raised."

"His disciples question him, and say, How shall we fast and how shall we [pray]? . . . and what [commandment] shall we keep . . . Jesus saith . . . do not . . . of truth . . . blessed is he . . . "



These two groups of sayings seem to have belonged to one original collection, whose date critics put somewhere in the first half of the second century. The source of this collection, and consequently its value, cannot with the present data be determined. The sayings may be based upon those in the Four Gospels, in which case the new material is the product of later speculation, and is of little value except as revealing the development of Christian thought in the second century; or the sayings may present one form in which the teaching of Jesus was handed down by tradition, in which case they could be used as a source, though not a first-class one, for his words. In a minute study of the problems connected with the origin and character of the Four Gospels these new sayings may give a little help; but they are of small importance otherwise, except as their discovery draws our thought to the treasures that may yet be found in that wonderful land of Egypt, where the things of yesterday seem old and crumbling, while the things of centuries ago are fresh and perfectly preserved.

## CHAPTER III

### THE APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS

THE word apocryphal has had a long and interesting history through which it has gained several distinct and widely unlike meanings. Uncanonical is one meaning; and any gospel that failed to gain a place in the list (canon) of the New Testament books may for that reason be called an apocryphal gospel. Spurious and, therefore, untrustworthy, is another meaning; and a gospel that is a mere fabrication with no historical value may for that reason be called an apocryphal gospel. This gives rise to confusion and unfair treatment when apocryphal gospels are discussed. All of them are uncanonical, but only some of them are worthless; yet they are spoken of sometimes as if they all were beneath serious attention, and at other times as if they all stood on a level with the canonical gospels, and had been kept out of the New Testament by accident or prejudice. We may avoid this confusion, and understand what basis there is for each of these opinions, by dividing the apocryphal gospels into two classes, and considering each separately.

*I. The Rejected Gospels*

There are certain chapters in the history of Jesus that are passed over in partial or complete silence by the New Testament writers, which appeal deeply to human curiosity. We should like to know more about Mary and Joseph, and the home in Nazareth, and the years which Jesus as a boy and man spent there; and we should like to know something about the mysterious period between his death and resurrection, when, though his body was lying in the new sepulchre, his spirit must have been active somewhere and in some way. Reverence and a recognition of the hopelessness of the task keep us from any serious attempt to fill in these unwritten chapters. But there were early writers who were not thus restrained; and they set forth in the form of gospels their ideas as to what these portions of the life of Jesus must have been. Such gospels are, of course, apocryphal in the sense of wholly untrustworthy; and because intelligent readers never took them seriously, we may call them rejected gospels. Still, as religious romances—the Ben Hurs of their day—they had a wide circulation; and ignorant people undoubtedly gave them more or less credence. A number of them are preserved and will be found in any collection of the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers. A list of them, with a hint of their contents, is as follows:



*The Protevangelium of James*—a history of the Virgin Mary from the incidents connected with her birth to Herod's murder of the babes at Bethlehem.

*The Gospel of Thomas*—incidents in the boyhood of Jesus in the years from five to twelve.

*The Gospel of Nicodemus*—in two parts, usually known as *The Acts of Pilate* and *The Descent into Hades*; the former gives various incidents of the trial, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the latter describes the scenes in the world of the dead when he appeared there after his death.

*The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*—a history of Mary and of Jesus' boyhood.

*The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*—practically an orthodox revision of the first part of Psuedo-Matthew.

*The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy*—partly a reproduction of the Protevangelium of James and the Gospel of Thomas, and partly wild legends resembling the tales in the Arabian Nights.

*The History of Joseph the Carpenter*—an account of his life, and more fully of his death, supposed to be told by Jesus to his disciples.

*The Passing of Mary*—an account in several forms of the death and assumption of Mary.

Of the above works the first two were probably written between the middle and the end of the second century; part of the Acts of Pilate may be of as early a date, though the evidence is weak; the other books are

a century or two later. They are directly valuable as the storehouse from which popular thought and pictorial art drew largely in the Middle Ages, especially as regards the Virgin Mary. To understand the story of the Madonna, as portrayed by the great artists, one must study these gospels. They are indirectly even more valuable as a proof of the trustworthiness of our Four Gospels. When it is said that what the New Testament tells us about Jesus is mainly the invention of later days, we have only to turn to these rejected gospels if we would know what the invention of later days would produce. Their stories of Jesus' boyhood, for example, are either silly or monstrous. The Gospel of Thomas tells how he made pigeons of clay, and by a miracle caused them to fly; how he overwhelmed his school teachers with shame by displaying his superior knowledge; how he was angry with Joseph when he corrected him; how he cursed his playmates, causing one to become impotent, and another to fall dead, so that "no one dared to make him angry"; and the other gospels contain stories equally or even more repulsive. If such things are what Christians of the second century would invent, when they tried their imagination upon the life of Christ, we may rest assured that the story told in the Four Gospels is not of their invention.

*II. The Discarded Gospels*

The preface to the Gospel of Luke begins with the statement that "many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." As we shall see later on, Luke probably knew of Mark's gospel and of some writing by Matthew, but these alone would not be enough to justify his statement that "many" were writing gospels. Evidently Luke lived at a time when there was a general demand for some written account of Christ's words and deeds, and when authors who could draw up such an account were busy in doing so. It is worth while to consider briefly just how such a demand arose.

In the early part of the Apostolic Age there was little incentive to write a biography of Jesus. He was expected to return very soon; his spiritual presence was deeply realized; and his brief earthly ministry seemed only a necessary preliminary of the glorious Kingdom of God. To dwell upon the Jesus of the past would be disloyalty to the Jesus of the present, and disbelief in the Jesus of the glorious future. Nevertheless, there were many inducements to tell something about his earthly life. In preaching to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, any events fulfilling prophecy would be rehearsed; in preaching to the Gentiles that Jesus

was the Son of God, his miracles and his words of superhuman authority would be strong arguments; and in preaching to any class of hearers, the story of his death and resurrection would be the best means of winning converts. And in their own daily life the Christians would be constantly turning back to the example and teachings of Jesus for guidance and comfort, or pondering upon his deeper sayings for light upon the mysteries of the present and the future. So the story of Jesus, or at least portions of it, would be in constant circulation from the earliest days.

At the outset the story was, of course, wholly oral. The presence of eye-witnesses obviated the necessity of resorting to written documents; and, moreover, the Jews shared the Oriental feeling, that religious truth ought to pass from teacher to learner by word of mouth and not by writing. All the great mass of the Talmud was for generations handed down orally, and its final reduction to writing was opposed by many. And the same preference for oral teaching is expressed by Papias, a Christian of the second century, when speaking of learning about Christ's life: "I did not think that what was to be gotten from the books would profit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voice." Such oral accounts of what Jesus said and did would have a more or less stereotyped form, partly because any account often repeated grows stereotyped in form, and still more because the tenacious Oriental



memory reproduces exactly whatever has been delivered to it.

As time went on, and Christianity spread, the need of written records would be felt, especially by Gentile converts, who were away from the eye-witnesses, and did not share the Oriental feeling about books. In response to it there would be produced, not biographies of Christ, but written copies of these oral groupings of his teachings on some special subject, or of his deeds as illustrating or confirming some point of Christian faith. His words would naturally be put in writing first, because it is more important, and also more difficult to retain them exactly in their original form. Accordingly, we may suppose that by the middle of the Apostolic Age there had come into existence in various places little books of Christ's sayings upon various topics (*e. g.*, his parables about the kingdom, his teachings about the second coming, his missionary instructions, his lessons on the greatness of service), with or without some brief statement of the circumstances under which they were spoken, and also little books telling of certain of his deeds that bore upon some special matter of interest (*e. g.*, miracles that displayed his love or his divinity, acts that showed his attitude toward the Sabbath, the story of his passion or of his resurrection), all put together with no thought of chronology and no aim at a complete history.

The decade A. D. 60-70 wrought a marked change in

Christian thought. Nero's persecution of the Christians in A. D. 64 was the first great act of hostility on the part of the Roman government; and while it was brief and confined to Rome, it must have caused a shock of horror and a sense of fear in every Christian circle. And the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70 both made an end of the church which had stood as the mother of them all, and forced a reconstruction of Messianic ideas and expectations.

It was at this period that the importance of putting in permanent form some record of Christ's earthly years seems to have been suddenly and strongly felt. The expectation of his speedy second coming had grown less keen, so that men began to arrange for the prolonged existence of the church before that event. The sense of his spiritual presence was perhaps less strong, so that the guidance to be drawn from his earthly words and deeds assumed new importance. And, above all, the apostles and eye-witnesses were rapidly dying off; and unless means were taken to preserve their story, it might soon be garbled or wholly lost. So men began to write gospels, impelled to this not by the historical spirit, but by practical wants, aiming not at completeness or exact chronology, but at the preservation of whatever they considered most important and helpful in the life of Christ.

They took the material that lay at hand—the written records that they possessed and the oral accounts that were in their memories—and they wove it together as

best they could. And when their work was completed, they offered it to the Christian circles in which they lived as their humble contribution toward keeping alive the memory of what the Lord had said and done in the precious years of his earthly ministry. There was no thought that in thus writing down the story of Jesus they were doing a work more sacred or requiring more inspiration than the work of their companions, who simply told orally the same story. And Luke sets forth very clearly what he considered the essential qualifications and also the purpose of an evangelist, when he says, "It seemed good to me, also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty concerning those things wherein thou wast taught by word of mouth."

How many such gospels were written, both before and after Luke wrote his, we shall never know. Of some we have fragments or quotations in early writers; of some we have only the names; and doubtless there were still others. There is always the hope that somewhere in the sands of Egypt they may be waiting discovery; but probably they have served their day and wholly passed away. For a time they had more or less circulation—indeed, some of them were popular; but eventually they were discarded for our canonical gospels. The reason for this was because either they contained nothing except what could be found in bet-



ter and more complete form in the canonical gospels, or else there had crept into them statements and teachings which the good judgment of the orthodox church could not endorse. When thus discarded, their disappearance was natural. Copies would not be multiplied, and those in existence would be worn out or lost. And in the time of Diocletian, when a special attempt was made by Roman persecutors to destroy the Christian sacred books, these discarded gospels would be cheerfully surrendered to the inquisitor's fire, if by so doing the canonical gospels could be kept back.

*The Gospel according to the Hebrews* is the most famous of these discarded gospels. It is quoted by writers from the end of the second century to the fifth century; and there is some evidence that it was in existence five centuries later. Possibly we may yet find a copy of it; but all that we know about it now is from the quotations and statements in these writers. It seems to have been a gospel written in Aramaic, and circulating among the Hebrew Christians. Apparently there were various forms of it—revisions and additions from time to time; and it was eventually translated into Greek. There has been much discussion as to its origin and value, and it still remains "one of the problems and enigmas of early Christian literature" (Moffatt). Some scholars set it aside as a compilation from the first three canonical gospels, with worthless addi-

tions and changes; others emphasize it as completely independent of our gospels and of equal value with them (*e. g.*, Holtzmann, "Life of Jesus," 51). An early tradition says that Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew (probably Aramaic); and an attempt has been made to prove that the Gospel according to the Hebrews was Matthew's Hebrew gospel; but this is now abandoned. To-day scholars are fairly well agreed that in its original form this gospel may be as early as those in the New Testament; and if we had it in this form, it would be a valuable source for the life of Christ. But as we only have a couple of dozen quotations, and no means of telling whether these are from an early or a late form of the book, the gospel is of little value. Nevertheless, its fragments are interesting, if only to show why the church finally refused to accept it as an authoritative work. Some of them are as follows:

(Before the Baptism.) "Behold the Lord's mother and brothers said to him, John the Baptist is baptizing for remission of sins; let us go and be baptized by him. But he said to them, What sin have I done that I should go and be baptized by him—unless, perhaps, what I have now said is ignorance."

(At the Baptism.) "It came to pass when the Lord had ascended out of the water, the whole fountain of the Holy Spirit came down and rested upon him, and said to him, My son, in all the prophets I was looking for thee, that thou shouldst come, and that I should

rest in thee. For thou art my rest; thou art my first-born son, who reignest to eternity."

(At the Temptation?) "The Holy Spirit, my mother, took me just now by one of my hairs, and carried me away to the great Mount Tabor."

(The appeal to Jesus by the man with a withered hand, Mark 3 : 1-6.) "I was a builder, seeking my living with my hands; I pray thee, Jesus, restore to me my health, that I may not basely beg my bread."

(After the Resurrection.) "The Lord, after handing over the linen cloth to the servant of the high-priest, went to James and appeared to him; for James had sworn he would eat no bread from the hour at which the Lord had drunk the cup till he should see him rising again from those who are asleep. . . . Bring, the Lord says, a table and bread. . . . He took bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to James the Just, and said to him, My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen from those who are asleep."

(In the Lord's Prayer.) "Give us to-day bread for to-morrow."

In the parable of the talents the man who had hid his talent is simply rebuked; and it is another servant, one who has spent his talents upon harlots and flute-players, that is cast into the outer darkness.

Eusebius (3 : 29) tells us that the Gospel according to the Hebrews contained the story of a woman who was accused of many sins before the Lord. Possibly

this was the story of the woman taken in adultery, which certainly does not belong in John's Gospel, where we now have it.

*The Gospel according to the Egyptians* is first mentioned about A. D. 200, and is named by only three writers, though possibly others may have quoted from it. One theory about the new-found sayings of Jesus (see p. 17) is that they are extracts from this gospel. The Gnostics were fond of it; but whether it originated among them, or was adapted by them from an earlier source, cannot be determined. The few quotations we have from it are not worth citing.

*The Gospel of Peter* is a work about which we knew but little until a fragment of it was discovered in Upper Egypt in the tomb of a monk a few years ago. Judging from this fragment, which begins with Pilate's washing his hands and breaks off with Simon Peter's going afishing, the book was written in the second century, using our gospels as its basis, and was intended to support certain forms of heretical thought which then flourished. The fragment is too long to quote; and its numerous variations from the gospel story, while interesting as a revelation of later thought, are of no historical value.

There are references in early writings to other gospels about which we know little or nothing more than the names, *e. g.*, Gospel of Andrew, Gospel of Barnabas, Gospel of Bartholomew, Gospel of the Twelve, and

possibly twenty others. Any conjecture concerning their contents, and any attempt to classify them as rejected or discarded, would be idle.

This completes our examination of the sources other than the canonical gospels, and we cannot fail to be impressed with the meagreness of its results. "It is a significant fact," says Keim, "that, as far as can be discovered from these [apocryphal] gospels and from the untenable notices in the writings of the Fathers, at the end of a hundred years after Christ, every independent and really valuable tradition concerning this life, outside of our gospels, was extinguished; and that nothing more than a growing mass of fables runs, as a pretended supplement, by the side of the latter" (Jesus of Nazara, 1 : 45).



## CHAPTER IV

### THE CANON OF THE GOSPELS

OUR examination of the sources has shown us that practically all our knowledge of the life of Jesus must be derived from the New Testament, and also that the other books of the New Testament simply confirm and to some extent repeat the story given in the Four Gospels. Accordingly our investigation must henceforth centre upon these gospels; and every problem presented by them becomes most important. Do we have them in their original form, or—if they have been altered—can we recover that original form? When were they written and by whom? What were the sources from which the authors gained their information? Do they give us authentic history, or history mixed with later legends and myths, or almost nothing that is historical? How far are they trustworthy?—that is the supreme question.

It is worth while to notice, however, that the question whether we shall believe in Christ does not depend altogether upon the question whether the gospels and the whole New Testament are trustworthy. Unlike Mohammedanism, Christianity is not a religion

based upon a book. Jesus neither wrote a book nor commanded his disciples to write one. Christianity lived and spread for many years without any sacred writings of its own. It accepted as a precious inheritance from the Jews their sacred writings—the Old Testament—and used them with profit “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness” (II Tim. 3 : 16); but certainly it did not draw its life and spiritual strength and wisdom from the Jewish writings. The promise of Christ on the night before his crucifixion, when he told his little flock about the future, was not that they should have a book in which they could read about him, but that he would send the Comforter to teach them, and that he himself would be with them and manifest himself unto them. Relying upon that promise the apostles went forth to win the world to faith in him. He was to be proclaimed not by a book but by a church that was his continued incarnation, and by a sacrament that showed forth his divine sacrifice. And if the New Testament never had been written, still the work of winning men to Christ would have gone steadily on; and belief in Christ would have survived and spread through the centuries. For even to-day such belief rests for its ultimate foundation not upon proofs that the gospels are trustworthy, but upon the outward manifestation of his presence and power by faithful followers whose lives and words are a proclamation of his



gospel, and upon the inward revelation experienced by a soul that puts its trust in him. If through some miracle of hostile criticism, the gospels should be entirely destroyed, the Christian world would doubtless cry in sore distress, "They have taken away my Lord"; but the cry would be just as ignorant and needless as when Mary Magdalene first uttered it.

Nevertheless, when we consider what the gospels have been to the church throughout the centuries, there seems little danger of overestimating their importance. They may not be absolutely indispensable, but they certainly are most helpful for a knowledge of what the Christ once was and therefore still is. We may reverently believe that the impulse which led the early Christians to record Jesus' words and deeds, was a divine one; and that the same divine prompting was the real cause of the setting apart of our Four Gospels as sacred books. This latter work is the subject of the present chapter. In treating of the discarded gospels we briefly pointed out the reasons why they were put away, and why the Four Gospels of the New Testament alone were retained. But it is worth while to consider the process of selection a little more fully, and especially how these Four Gospels, when thus selected, came to be considered inspired books. The technical term for this process is the formation of the canon; and the term itself may require a preliminary paragraph of explanation.

The word canon is derived from the Greek word for a reed, and its original meaning was a measuring stick—a carpenter's rule. All its later meanings, which are several, have grown out of this original one, and have either the active signification of a measure or standard, or else the passive one of something measured or prescribed. A canonical book is so called because it gives the measure or rule of Christian faith, or more probably because it has been declared by the church to come up to the measure or standard of inspiration required of a sacred book. In other words, a canonical book is a book that is entitled to a place in the Bible. A list of such books is called a canon, *e. g.* the canon of the Old Testament and the canon of the New Testament. The formation of the canon of the gospels, therefore, is the process by which the church came to regard certain lives of Jesus as authoritative and inspired, and placed them in the list of sacred books that constitute the New Testament.

The Christian church began, as we have just noticed, with no sacred books except those of the Old Testament. Indeed, it could have no others because at the beginning it did not realize that it was anything other than one part of the Jewish church—namely, the part that accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah. It observed the Jewish Sabbath—Saturday—as a sacred day, and worshipped in the synagogues, if the Jews did not object. It also had its own meetings for wor-

ship and Christian instruction; and very early it came to hold them on Sunday, a day made precious by the resurrection of Jesus. At these meetings the central theme, of course, was the one which could not be dwelt upon in the synagogue. The Old Testament was here studied for the light it threw upon Christ's mission; and the recollections of those who had known Jesus personally, or had gathered from others some precious knowledge of his life, were rehearsed for the cheer and instruction of all present. Later on, when there were books or booklets containing the words or deeds of Jesus, these would be read aloud for the same purpose. The individual church or some wealthy member of it would count such books a choice possession, and when a new one was heard of that was fuller or better would be desirous to obtain a copy of it.

Still these written accounts of Christ were thought to be in no way different, except in form, from the oral accounts; and the preference was rather for the oral. Papias, who was born about A. D. 70, doubtless expresses the feeling and practice of the majority of the Christians of his time, when he says, in a passage from which we have already quoted:

"If any one came who had been a follower of the elders" (*i. e.*, of the apostles and their immediate disciples) "I questioned him in regard to the words of the elders—what Andrew or what Peter said, or what was said by Philip or by Thomas or by James or by John

or by Matthew, or by any other of the disciples of the Lord; and what things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I did not think that what was to be gotten from the books would profit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voice" (Eusebius 3 : 39).

Unless we suppose that these oral accounts were deemed inspired and sacred, which is evidently absurd, the books which were acceptable simply as a substitute for them, could not have been esteemed more highly. The teachings of Jesus were regarded as divine and, therefore, at least as authoritative as anything in the Old Testament; but there was no thought that a book in which they were recorded became from that fact a divine book. If a Christian of the time of Papias or even later had been asked, What is your canon of the Sacred Scriptures? he would have answered by giving the list of those books alone that make up the Old Testament.

Meanwhile a process of selection was going on. When a church, whose gospel contained only the sayings of Jesus, obtained another that contained the deeds as well as the words, it would discard the former for the latter. So, likewise, it would prefer a gospel that was supposed to tell the story as gathered directly from the lips of an apostle, to one of more doubtful authority. And if, perchance, the gospel it was reading contained certain statements that its spiritual sense



declared not consistent with the Christ it knew by personal experience, such a gospel would be set aside when a better one came to hand. In this way the promise of Jesus concerning the Comforter's mission as teacher (John 14 : 26) was being fulfilled. By the middle of the second century or a little later, practically all Christians in orthodox circles were accepting the Four Gospels now in the New Testament as the only authoritative ones. The others were either quietly discarded, or else were cherished by those only who held views that the church pronounced heretical. As a matter of fact the church now had a canon of the gospels, though it did not yet realize this because it had not begun to call these books sacred writings.

In the last quarter of the second century a great change came over the church. Circumstances forced the rapid development of creed and church government and the idea of Christian Scriptures. Enemies appeared in the bosom of the church itself, and their heretical teachings had to be combated. On the one hand were teachers who broke with the past entirely, and claimed that they themselves were the recipients of new and wonderful revelations: these were the Montanists. On the other hand were sects who professed to have esoteric knowledge and mysterious books, handed down from the first century, in which new meanings were given to the teachings of Christ: these were the Gnostics.

The church thus confronted and put on its defence, seems to have felt that its present inspiration was not enough. These enemies also claimed to be inspired, and must be met by something stronger than mere counterclaims; so the church emphasized the inspiration that was in the apostles. And because the heretics had their own sacred books, or claimed the right to reject any Christian books that did not agree with their own teachings, the church was compelled to emphasize the sacredness and consequent authority of the writings it had accepted. Almost unconsciously and before they were aware of it, these Christians of A. D. 180-200 had put their treasured volumes on the same level with the Old Testament, and were quoting from them as inspired and authoritative. The canon of the New Testament, which includes the canon of the gospels, was set forth. It is a remarkable change; and yet it came about very simply and naturally. The books were there, and the church was constantly using them; the hour had come when their divine authority needed to be clearly proclaimed, and the church proclaimed it. The sword of the spirit had been fashioned long before; but it was not recognized to be a weapon until this time of danger when the church seized it and used it for battle.

We call the writers of this period the Apologists, because their chief labor was the defense of the faith against its enemies. They were able men, and many



of them had been heathen scholars and philosophers before they were converted to the Christian faith. We have much of their writings still preserved, and can tell just what books they thought should have a place in the canon of the New Testament. And while there was not full agreement as to certain books, of which some later on were placed in the New Testament and others were not, there was full agreement as to the gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were the lives of Christ, and the only lives of Christ, that the Apologists, speaking for the church of their day, proclaimed sacred. And the church at no later period of its history has ever shown a disposition to question that decision, or a desire to change it. Of course, there are, as there have always been, individual scholars who assail the inspiration and authority of some one gospel or of all four; but such assaults produce little impression. The church patiently meets the objections urged, though none of them are new, and sets itself to the task of answering them; but it is never seriously disturbed; for its faith in the sacred authority of the Four Gospels rests on a deeper foundation than any that these critics can undermine, namely, on the witness of the Spirit of Christ, testifying to the things concerning himself.

By whom, then, was the canon formed? A popular opinion is that certain great councils of the church, especially those at Hippo, in A.D. 393, and at Carthage,

in A. D. 397 and A. D. 419, definitely determined the New Testament canon. But really all that these councils did (as also the one at Laodicea, in A. D. 363, if it took any action) was to publish in an authoritative manner the list of the twenty-seven books which the church, independent of the council, was using and deeming sacred. The canon was already made, and it was not made by any council or any one leader: the whole body of Christians had a voice in the matter. And we may push our conclusion one step further. Deissmann, speaking of the New Testament as literature, says, "The fact that scarcely any but popular and primitive Christian writings found their way into the nascent New Testament, is a brilliant proof of the unerring tact of the church that formed the canon." Is this not equivalent to saying—whether Deissmann would admit it or not—that the Spirit of God working in the church, guiding the selection of its sacred books, and endorsing their spiritual power and authority, was the real agent in the formation of the canon?

## CHAPTER V

### THE TEXT OF THE GOSPELS

IN a critical study of the Four Gospels, the first question properly is, Have these books come down to us without alteration so that we possess the text in its original form? And that the answer must be no, is evident from the fact that among all the existing manuscripts no two exactly agree. Such a lack of agreement is not surprising, because the very earliest of these manuscripts was written long after the Apostolic Age, and is the result of copying the original we know not how many times. Until after the middle of the second century, as we have seen, no special sacredness was attached to the books, such as would lead a copyist to take unusual pains with his work; and the men who did the copying were often without special training. A humble Christian who felt that he would like to possess a gospel would set himself in his spare hours to making a copy of the one his church or some friend owned, or would hire an acquaintance more skilful with the pen to copy it for him; and later on this copy might serve as the original for another copy made with similar freedom. How great, then, the possibility that in the

course of time all sorts of errors—omissions, alterations, insertions, transpositions—might creep into the text! Even in later centuries, when a recognition of the sacredness of the books caused more care in securing correct copies, errors would not be wholly avoided, for copying is a process always liable to errors.

Now, can we by any means correct these errors, and thus secure a text which reproduces the original words of the evangelists? This is a far more difficult question to answer, yet the answer may confidently be yes. The work of securing a correct text belongs to that department of Biblical study known as textual criticism or (because it furnishes the foundation for all further critical work) the lower criticism. The material at hand for this work is three-fold; first, existing early copies of the gospel in Greek, which was probably their original language; second, existing early copies in other languages into which the gospels were soon translated; and third, any early Christian writings containing quotations from the gospels. All three, of course, are in manuscript form; but we usually call only the first the manuscripts, and the other two the versions and the fathers.

### *I. The Manuscripts*

In the early Christian centuries the cheapest, handiest material for writing, was bits of broken pottery—potsherds. *Ostraca* is the Greek name for them—fa-

miliar to us through the word ostracize. They would be used only by the poorest people, and would seldom be large enough to contain more than brief documents—a receipt, a memorandum, a short letter, a quotation and the like. Since the Christians largely belonged to the poorest classes, they were accustomed to use ostraca; and if they wished to preserve for their own use or send to another a little story about Jesus or a saying of his, they would write it down upon a potsherd. Once written upon this material the document was almost imperishable; and when it presently found the way to a city rubbish heap, it would wait through the centuries for the spade of the explorer. Unfortunately the explorer has, until recently, scorned such humble documents, and thrown them away without examination. Now he has grown more appreciative, and large collections of ostraca are being made. Some of these (see Deissmann, “Light from the Ancient East,” 41*f.*) contain verses from the gospels; and though nothing of great value has yet been found, there is the possibility that at any time we may run across ostraca most precious because giving gospel passages in the form in which they circulated freely in the earliest days.

The ordinary material for books and letters in the first three Christian centuries was papyrus—from which name is derived our word paper. It was made by cutting the pith of the papyrus reed into thin slices



of any desired length, and placing upon one layer of these slices another layer at right angles to the first, with glue or paste between the two to hold them together, and then pressing them and smoothing them. This formed a page; and if the document was to be a long one, the right-hand side of one page was glued to the left-hand side of another, until a long strip was formed; and the whole was rolled around a stick, to which the last page was fastened. The writing on a single leaf might be on both sides; but on a roll or volume it was only on the inner side (which would be the one where the fibres ran horizontally), and was arranged in columns a few inches in breadth so that they could be conveniently read as the manuscript was unrolled with the right hand and rolled up with the left. Papyrus was fragile—especially as it grew dry from age—and, unless carefully handled, would crack and crumble. A roll would not endure many years of use: so we need not be surprised that, with the exception of a few fragments found in Egypt, no papyrus manuscripts of the New Testament are known to exist. The loss of the original ending of Mark—about which we will speak later—may have been caused by some accident to the last page of the roll on which the gospel was written; or that page, which was next the stick, may have become hopelessly worn and broken before any one roused to the necessity of making a new copy.



The other material for books was parchment, the finer forms of which are called vellum. It was made from the skin of sheep, goats, calves, and other animals, by removing the hair, and stretching, scraping, and rubbing with chalk the skin until it became thin, flexible, and suited for receiving ink. Parchment was vastly superior to papyrus in durability, but it was too expensive for ordinary use by poor people. Paul owned some parchments which he valued highly (II Tim. 4 : 13); probably they were books of the Old Testament. And when Christian churches began to recognize that the books of the New Testament were their most precious treasure, they would seek to have copies on parchment, if they could afford it. By the third or fourth century, the use of parchment had generally supplanted that of papyrus.

A manuscript with leaves like a modern book is more convenient than a roll, especially if the reader wishes to compare different portions of his text, as he often does when reading the New Testament. A manuscript in this book form is called a codex, because its shape is like that of the wooden tablet smeared with wax, which was used for writing (Luke 1 : 63), and bore this name. Some papyrus manuscripts were codices, though the leaves were too brittle for frequent turning; but when parchment came into use the codex form became universal. In a codex both sides of the page were used; but the influence of the roll form is

shown in the fact that the writing is still arranged in columns—usually two on a page, though sometimes one or three or four.

Manuscripts were very rarely dated; so their age has to be determined in various ways. The material on which they are written is one aid; for papyrus, as we have noted, went out of use early, while paper made of cotton and later of linen rags, did not come into use until about the 14th century. A greater aid is the style of writing; for fashions in penmanship flourished and passed away then as they do now; and an expert can determine pretty closely the time when a manuscript was written from the style of its writing.

A broad division of manuscripts according to style of writing is into uncials or majuscules and cursives or minuscules. Uncials have the letters unconnected and of the same size, usually rather large, with no divisions between the words, and very little punctuation. They remind one of the epistle a small boy prints in capitals, beginning MYDEARFATHER. Their failure to punctuate and to separate the words may sometimes make the sense doubtful; even as the English sentence, GODISNOWHERE, may be most devout or atheistic. The cursives, as the name would imply, are written in a running hand, *i. e.*, with the letters connected; and they have the words separated. In the early centuries the cursive writing was used for business and incidental purposes, and was not con-

sidered fine enough for books; but in the ninth century a beautiful cursive hand was invented, and thenceforth it was used for all manuscripts. The earliest copies of the epistles and possibly of the other New Testament books were probably written in the cursive hand, as being only incidental writings and for circulation among poor people; but when they rose to the dignity and value of sacred books they were copied in uncials; and these are our earliest extant manuscripts.

The gradual development of a system of punctuation furnishes another means of determining the age of a manuscript; and the arrangement of the lines, the division into chapters (though not our present one), and the notations upon the margin of the page, are still other means which we need not describe in detail. Enough to say that, in spite of the absence of dates, a trained scholar can in most cases tell within less than a century the exact age of any manuscript.

At first, of course, each book of the New Testament circulated as a separate manuscript; and even when they were brought together, they were rarely all put into one manuscript, since with papyrus this would be impossible, and with parchment the book would be too bulky for convenient use except as a church Bible. Usually they were put into four groups, each forming a separate manuscript, viz. the Gospels, Acts and the Catholic Epistles, the Pauline Epistles including Hebrews, and the Apocalypse. In addition to these there

were, as early as the fourth century, though most of the extant manuscripts are much later, lectionaries, *i. e.*, books of Scripture lessons arranged for reading in church services—the extracts being at first from the gospels, and later on also from Acts and the Epistles. In reckoning the number of existing manuscripts we count each separate one, whether it contains the whole New Testament, or one group, or a single book, or merely a fragment. Thus reckoning we have, besides the lectionaries, over one hundred and sixty uncials, and fully three thousand cursives. Of course, the number of manuscripts containing the gospels, either alone or with the other portions of the New Testament, is much less; nevertheless, the gospels were the most often copied, and constitute a majority of existing manuscripts. In order to distinguish these manuscripts for enumeration and discussion the cursives are designated by Arabic numerals, and the uncials by letters of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew alphabets. And as each of the four groups is treated separately, the same manuscript, if it contains more than one group, may be designated by different numerals. Recent scholars are seeking a new system of enumeration that shall avoid the use of so many alphabets for the uncials, and shall give the same designation always to a particular manuscript.

No scholar professes to have a knowledge of all this great number of manuscripts—in fact, many of the



cursives have never been carefully examined. But even a tyro in Biblical criticism ought to know something about the most famous of the uncials. They are the following:

*Codex Alexandrinus* (designated by *A*), so-called because it once belonged to the patriarch of Alexandria, is in the British Museum. Its date is in the fifth century. It has two columns to the page; and while it contains most of the Old Testament, it lacks in the New Testament all of Matthew to 25 : 6; and John 6 : 50-8 : 52, and II Cor. 4 : 13-12 : 7. As its designating letter would indicate, it was the first of the great manuscripts to become accessible to scholars.

*Codex Vaticanus* (*B*) is at Rome in the library of the Vatican. Its date is in the fourth century. It has three columns to the page; and it lacks some portions of the Old Testament, and Hebrews after 9 : 14, the Pastoral Epistles, Philemon, and the Apocalypse. The Vatican has counted this manuscript among its treasures for more than four hundred years; it was carried off to Paris by Napoleon, and afterward returned; but only very recently has it been made accessible to scholars.

*Codex Ephraemi* (*C*), now in the National Library at Paris, is of the fifth century. It is a palimpsest, *i. e.*, a parchment upon which the original writing has become very dim by fading or by deliberate erasion, and a second writing has been placed over the first. The



second writing in this case is the works of Ephraem the Syrian—hence the name of the manuscript. It has but one column on a page, and is badly stained by the use of chemicals to brighten the under writing. Originally it contained the whole Bible; but it has been pulled to pieces; and the monk who wrote on it the works of Ephraem took only disconnected leaves; so most of the Old Testament and about one third of the New Testament are missing. Portions remain of every book in the New Testament except II Thess. and II John.

*Codex Bezae* (D) was given by Beza, A. D. 1581, to the University of Cambridge, England, in whose library it still remains. Its date is early in the sixth century. It has one column to the page, and contains only the gospels and Acts, with some leaves missing. Opposite each page of the Greek is a Latin translation; and both present certain peculiarities of text which must be considered later on.

*Codex Sinaiticus* (S) was discovered by Tischendorf about fifty years ago in a monastery on Mt. Sinai, and is now in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg. The story of its discovery is most interesting, but too long to be rehearsed here. It has four columns to a page, and contains much of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament, as well as some other early Christian writings. Its date is in the fourth century—about the same as that of the *Codex Vaticanus*. Gregory thinks

that both of these codices may have been among the fifty fine copies of the Bible which the Emperor Constantine in A. D. 331 asked Eusebius to prepare for him that he might give them to the churches.

Possessing this multitude of manuscripts, no two of which exactly agree, how shall the scholar use them to secure the correct text? At first thought it might seem that the best way would be to decide which manuscript is the earliest, and to adopt the text it gives. But that will not do because the earliest manuscript we possess is comparatively late, and may be the last of a series of copies in which, by carelessness or by deliberate choice, numerous changes have been made in the text. A much later manuscript, if it was copied carefully from a very early one, will really be nearer the original. Nor will it do simply to count manuscripts and follow the majority, accepting a certain reading, if, for example, out of forty manuscripts thirty support it and ten are against it. There may be reasons why an erroneous reading is a popular one, or why a poor text has been copied more times than a good one. Neither age nor numbers can be taken as the guide to the correct text.

Errors in manuscripts are due to one of two causes,—either to carelessness in copying, or to deliberate changes made by the copyist. These two classes of errors must be treated separately in any discussion of how to discover and correct them. And while our

subject is simply the gospels, whatever is said concerning them applies equally to the other books of the New Testament.

No manuscript is wholly free from mistakes made by the carelessness of the writer. In fact, if we had the original autograph of one of the gospels, we might find in it some error caused, as we say, by a slip of the pen. The statement in Matt. 23 : 35 that Zachariah was the son of Barachiah, instead of the son of Jehoiada, may possibly have been such a slip. Copyists in old times made exactly the same blunders that copyists in the present day make—omitting, transposing, or repeating words, changing spelling, confounding one word with another and the like. In the case of the gospels two other possible causes of error in copying existed. When the owner of a manuscript wished to preserve some item of interest, such as an additional fact or an interpretation, he would make a note of it next to the text on the margin; and a copyist might suppose it was something accidentally omitted, and so insert it in the text. Again, if the copyist was more familiar with one of the other gospels, he might unconsciously put down a passage, especially some saying of Jesus, in the form he already knew rather than in the form given in the manuscript before him.

Errors arising from carelessness are usually not difficult to correct, because they are evident. Inspection soon reveals whether a manuscript has been made by

a blundering copyist; and if it has, its value is correspondingly diminished. As a matter of fact, the mere process of copying has not increased errors in the text to the extent that might be expected. If it had, the manuscripts of the fourteenth century would be widely different from those of the fourth, and indeed from one another; whereas the reverse is the case. Even a student who knows no Greek can perceive this when he takes the King James version, which was based on a text made by Erasmus from a few late manuscripts, and compares it with the revised version, whose Greek text was constructed mainly from that of the great uncials. The difference between the two is not so very much, and is due far more to other causes—which we shall next consider—than to copyists' blunders.

The other class of errors arises from changes in the text made deliberately, and is a far more serious matter, which must be considered at some length.

In the first century doubtless many copies of the gospels were made. And, as we have noted when discussing the formation of the canon, there was no thought that the books were sacred, or that they were vitally necessary for the church: there was simply the recognition that they were helpful in a Christian life as supplying the place of the oral story originally told by eye-witnesses. Accordingly the single aim of a copyist was to reproduce the original manuscript; the



only changes he might make would be unintentional ones; and, barring mistakes and omissions, these copies would give the original text. If we can discover any of them, or any exact reproduction of them in later centuries, we may feel that we are in possession of substantially the identical words of the evangelists.

The second century brought a change. The eye-witnesses were gone; and the gospels, though not yet deemed sacred writings, were recognized as of greater importance. There was a natural wish to make them as full and accurate as possible. The oral tradition had not yet wholly disappeared, for men were still living who at first-hand or second-hand had received it from the apostles; and while that tradition was practically the same as the written story, there were differences of various sorts. A Christian making a copy of a gospel would incorporate in its text such changes or additions drawn from the oral tradition as seemed to him worth preserving. Thus it came about that the text of this period lacked uniformity. It was treated with a freedom such as neither the earlier nor any later period encouraged. The differences between different manuscripts were not great or important, but they were numerous. Additions or omissions, explanatory clauses, interpretations, and the like were considered justifiable.

Toward the end of the second century, as we have seen, the church awakened to the fact that the gospels



and other New Testament writings were as sacred as the Old Testament. This put an end to the free manner of copying them, but gave rise to another kind of deliberate alteration. The evangelists were men of limited education, and their writings bore traces of this fact. So long as the readers also were without special literary training, this made no difference. But now Christianity claimed many scholars, and was assailed by others. If the gospels were to be set forth as sacred books, it was important that literary blemishes be removed from them. Reverence might check any change in their contents, but it did not go so far as to forbid improvements in style and diction. To substitute a classical word for a colloquial one, to mend faults in grammar, to smooth away the roughnesses that offended educated readers, seemed no more a tampering with the sacred text than to translate it from Greek into Latin or Syriac. Indeed, what was such improvement but a translation from the language of the ignorant into the language of scholars? Only a scholar, however, would feel the need of such a revision, or venture to undertake it. And there is no indication that it was ever done extensively.

A much more general need was created by the fact that manuscripts differed from one another. Before the gospels were canonized, this was felt to be no objection,—perhaps, indeed, an advantage; but now that their words were used as final authority, it was impor-

tant to have one definite accepted form of those words. For example, in John 7 : 8 the words of Jesus probably were "I go not up unto this feast"; nevertheless, the account shows that he did go up later on. Some copyist, noting this inconsistency, removed it, and gave what he thought was Jesus' real meaning, by transforming "not" into "not yet" through a simple change in a single Greek word. As a result there now were some manuscripts reading "I go not up," and others, "I go not up yet." Which of the two readings was correct? There was need of an authoritative text. Such need would be felt in the third century, and apparently attempts were made to supply it; but not until the fourth century, when Christianity had become the state religion, was the church in a condition to adopt and emphasize such a text.

If we were constructing a final, authoritative text to-day, our one aim would be to reproduce the exact words of the evangelists. But this did not seem so important to the men of that age. What they wanted was a text containing all the matter found in the various manuscripts, and avoiding any perplexing disagreements and difficulties, and suited in style and diction to attract readers. To frame such a text was not the work of one man or of one generation; but by the middle of the fourth century it was framed and came to be generally adopted. This was the last stage in the history of text development. Thenceforth the work of

copyists was simply to reproduce the manuscript that lay before them. And manuscripts down to the age of printing are fairly faithful copies—usually of the text last described.

In the preceding sketch of the history of the text so much has been said about deliberate changes that a word of reassurance may be profitable. In whatever way copyists altered the text, there is little indication that they did it in order to establish new doctrines or to give a different picture of Christ. Such a change as that in John 7: 8 might be ascribed to a desire to defend the truthfulness of Jesus; and there are a few similar ones; but the ablest critics agree that they can find “no signs of deliberate falsification of the text for dogmatic purposes” (Westcott and Hort, N. T. in Greek, 2 : 282). We can see this for ourselves by comparing the Authorized Version with the Revised Version, which is a translation of an earlier and better text. We discover little changes in every chapter and almost every verse; but the picture of Christ and the teachings he gave are the same in both. The early church may have foolishly thought it could improve the form of the gospels; but it recognized the truth of their message too plainly to attempt any change or improvement in that.

Having thus seen how the changes in the manuscripts originated, we are prepared to understand how critics go at the task of working back through the multitude

of manuscripts to the original text. The first step is to divide the manuscripts into groups according to their origin and character as described above. Westcott and Hort were two English scholars who led the way in this. One group is made up of manuscripts reproducing the text adopted finally in the fourth century. This is called the Syrian group because its text seems to have originated in Syria, or the Antiochian group because Antioch was, perhaps, the special Syrian city where it originated. The Codex Alexandrinus would, so far as the gospels are concerned, be put mainly in this group, and so—to a less degree—would the Codex Ephraemi.

Of the writers who prepared this Syrian or Antiochian text, Westcott and Hort say (*id.*, 134): "They were evidently anxious to remove all stumbling blocks out of the way of the ordinary reader, so far as this could be done without recourse to violent measures. They were apparently equally desirous that he should have the benefit of instructive matter contained in all existing texts, provided it did not confuse the context or introduce seeming contradictions." They so wrought at the text that "it presents the New Testament in a form smooth and attractive, but appreciably impoverished in sense and force, more fitted for cursory perusal or recitation than for repeated and diligent study." Gregory (Canon and Text of the New Testament, 501) bluntly says of it: "This text is the worst text in exist-



ence." Our own interest in it is great, since the King James Version reproduces it. It was the general character of the text, rather than any special faults of the few and late manuscripts used by Erasmus, who prepared the printed Greek text which the King James translators followed, that made a Revised Version necessary.

The second group is called the Alexandrian because its text possibly originated in Alexandria where at the beginning of the third century the finest Christian scholarship was to be found. This presents the purely literary revisions of the manuscripts. In this text "the changes made have usually more to do with language than with matter, and are marked by an effort after correctness of phrase. They are evidently the work of careful and leisurely hands, and not seldom display a delicate philological tact which unavoidably lends them at first a deceptive appearance of originality" (Westcott and Hort, *id.*, 131). The group is small and of minor importance; in fact, some scholars would not recognize it as a separate group.

The third group is called the Western, though the name is somewhat misleading, since its origin was no more in the West than in the East. Its text is that free rendering of the gospels which seems to have been usual everywhere in the second century. The most famous manuscript of this group is the Codex Bezae, which illustrates the characteristics of the group. When Beza presented it to the University of Cam-



bridge, he asked that it be preserved but not published, because it contained many variations from the text then accepted as accurate, which was the Syrian one. Most of these variations are unimportant, but some are very interesting. After Luke 6 : 4 there is the following incident concerning Jesus: "On the same day he saw a certain man working on the Sabbath; and he said to him, Man, if indeed thou knowest what thou doest, thou art blessed; but if thou knowest not, thou art accursed and a transgressor of the Law." There is little reason to question the genuineness of this saying of Jesus; in a striking way it expresses his attitude toward the Sabbath, which was also the attitude of St. Paul (Rom. 14 : 5*f*). In Luke 23 : 53 it adds to the account of how Joseph laid the body of Jesus in the tomb: "And when he was laid there he put against the tomb a stone which twenty men could scarcely roll." Matthew says the stone was great; but this description of it has a true Homeric flavor. To Jesus' words about the greatness of service we have this addition in Matt. 20 : 28. "But seek ye to increase from little, and from greater to be less," which seems a genuine saying (*cf.* James 1 : 9). Besides these and other additions there are also omissions. Examples of them can be seen by taking the Revised Version, and noting its marginal statement, "Some ancient authorities omit," concerning Luke 22 : 19-20, and various passages in Luke 24. All these are omitted in the Codex Bezae.

If the Codex Bezae stood alone, it could be disregarded—as Beza thought it should be; but though there are few existing manuscripts resembling it,<sup>1</sup> there is abundant proof that it represents a form of text widely prevalent in the second century—a form characterized by additions and paraphrases in which no two manuscripts exactly agree. How valuable is this text? That is a question which critics to-day are busily discussing. It cannot yet be answered; but the general tendency is to attach much more importance to the Western text than formerly. For the life of Christ it does not seem—at least, so far as we now have it—to furnish special aid; but when we study the Book of Acts it is—as Ramsay shows in his *Life of Paul*—full of suggestive hints.

One more group of manuscripts remains, and is most important of all. Westcott and Hort call it the Neutral Group because in it we seem to have a text more free from deliberate changes than in the rest; in other words, its manuscripts seem to have been copied directly or in direct descent from the faithful manuscripts of the first century. The great representatives of this group are the two fine uncials, B and  $\aleph$ . These two uncials, especially B, were used by Westcott and

<sup>1</sup> A fine uncial manuscript of the Four Gospels, recently discovered and now owned by Mr. Freer of Detroit, promises to be an important addition to the Western group. Scholars who have examined it declare that in age and value it is the equal of Codex Bezae. Its text will soon be published.

Hort as chief authorities when preparing their edition of the Greek New Testament; and much importance was attached to them by the scholars who gave us the Revised Version.

These, then, are the four groups. Their characteristics are briefly indicated by the names Gregory has suggested for them, *viz.*, the Official Text, the Polished Text, the Rewrought Text, and the Original Text. The task of determining in which group a particular manuscript should be placed is not always an easy one, for no manuscript has a text belonging altogether to one group. A manuscript is like a man whose blood may be comparatively pure, or may be mingled with that of one or more alien races up to a point where his nationality is not readily discerned. When, however, a manuscript has been assigned to its proper group, we have thereby gained a most valuable aid in determining its general worth and the importance of its special variations. Its text will display the characteristics of the group, and must be valued accordingly. For example, a characteristic of the Western group is additions: if, therefore, we find in Western manuscripts an addition found nowhere else, we set this down as probably not belonging to the original text of the evangelists.

The work of the textual critic is by no means finished when he has classified and valued his manuscripts, and has done his best to correct errors evidently caused by

careless copying or deliberate change. There still remain passages in which manuscripts of equally good authority do not agree; and he must decide what reading to accept. In doing this the rule he follows is one adopted by all textual critics, no matter in what field of literature they work, *viz.*, "That reading is probably genuine from which the origin and diffusion of the others may be most readily explained." In accordance with this rule a difficult reading is usually preferred to an easy one, since a copyist would be more likely to simplify an obscure passage than to do the reverse. For example, in Matt. 6 : 1, "righteousness" is probably the correct reading, though "alms" is simpler. Also a shorter reading is preferred to a longer one, since the tendency is to enlarge rather than to condense. For this reason, in Matt. 6 : 4, 6, 18, the word "openly" is to be omitted: we can understand why it should be added but not why it should be omitted by a copyist. A second rule is: "The text should never be constructed by pure conjecture; some respectable manuscript must contain the reading that is to be adopted." This rule is peculiar to New Testament criticism, and arises from the fact that the New Testament differs from all other ancient books in the vast number of its manuscripts still extant. Of most Greek and Latin classics there are only a few manuscripts, sometimes only one. Of the Old Testament there are many Hebrew manuscripts, but none of them is early,



and they all reproduce but one form of the text—a form fixed by the rabbis after the destruction of Jerusalem. In both cases, therefore, the critic is obliged to depend largely upon conjecture, if he would push back from the text before him to the original. Though this makes his task more simple, the results are not satisfactory: concerning many passages he has to confess that the text is undoubtedly wrong, but that there is no possibility of correcting it. The New Testament critic is in a much more advantageous position. It is true that he is confronted with a multiplicity of readings which might at first sight make him despair of ever determining the correct text; but the very cause of despair is also the assurance of success. While every manuscript adds to the number of variations, it is also a fresh witness to the original text. And from the testimony of such a multitude of witnesses the facts he is seeking can nearly always be ascertained. Somewhere among the manuscripts the original reading is almost certainly retained.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE TEXT OF THE GOSPELS

(CONTINUED)

IF the importance of ascertaining the original text of the gospels were less great, the testimony of the manuscripts would be sufficient. Indeed, in the case of other ancient books, no one would think of seeking further evidence. But because the gospels are far more important than other books, we seek and welcome testimony from every possible witness.

#### *II. The Versions*

The second source of knowledge is the versions. These are translations of the gospels made as Christianity spread among peoples who knew little or no Greek, and wished to read the gospels in their own language. They are of various dates; but for textual criticism only those are valuable that were made before our earlier Greek manuscripts. A later version might simply follow a text we already have in the manuscripts; but an earlier version must have been made from a manuscript earlier than any we now possess, and may throw light upon the text of that earlier

manuscript. For example, when we are trying to determine what was the original text of Luke 2 : 14, if we find in a version made in the third century the reading, "And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased," we infer that the translator found this reading in the manuscript he used, and are correspondingly disposed to believe that it was the original reading.

Of course, a version is in manuscript form, and the existing copies are much later than the time when the version was made. There may be errors of copyists, and there may be deliberate changes to make the text agree with that of some Greek manuscript which a copyist knew. We have also to reckon with the problem of how correct the translation was. In our English Old Testament the changes in the Revised Version arise mainly from the fact that the King James translators were not as familiar with Hebrew as are modern scholars, and so made mistakes in their work. The versions of the gospels may in like manner be faulty. Moreover, when we are seeking to secure the exact words of the Greek text, a version is but an imperfect help because evidently the only way to get back to the Greek from the version is by retranslation of it into Greek; and there are many possibilities of change in words and order when so doing. If the best of Greek scholars should translate a chapter of our English New Testament back into Greek, the result would

not be the exact text which was before the translators when they made that English version. Despite all these difficulties, "the value of versions is still considerable; and in the matter of determining the authenticity of whole clauses or sentences inserted or omitted by Greek manuscripts, it is sometimes very great" (Mitchell, "Critical Handbook," 114).

In the work of carrying Christianity throughout the Roman Empire the apostles and early missionaries needed no other language than Greek, so long as they kept to the great highways of commerce and civilization. Along the western part of the Mediterranean, on both the northern and southern shores, the native language was Latin; at the eastern end it was Aramaic; in the Valley of the Nile it was Egyptian or Coptic; and in each petty region there was also a local dialect peculiar to that region. But the great language of intercommunication, read and spoken by educated men all around the Mediterranean, was Greek. In this language a merchant of Corinth would write to his correspondent in Antioch; and a strolling teacher from Alexandria would lecture to his classes in Rome. This is the reason why the gospel story, first in its oral form and later in its written form, was put into Greek.

The Greek of the New Testament is evidently not the same as that of the classics or of contemporaneous books modelled after the classics; and the cause of the difference has been a subject of much debate among

scholars. Formerly it was supposed that New Testament Greek was a special dialect arising from the influence of the Septuagint, or from the fact that its writers were men whose native tongue was Aramaic. But recently an increased knowledge of the Greek in common use during the first century has shown that New Testament Greek is practically the ordinary Greek of that day. The evangelists and apostles wrote as they preached, in the language familiar to every one who used Greek at that time; and, although it sometimes seemed novel, this was mainly because they had a new message to proclaim, and the language must be shaped to express it.

Despite the advantage of having the gospels in Greek, the need of having them in other languages would soon be felt. The majority of Christians were of lowly position, and could read or understand no other than their native tongue. Until the Gospels were translated into that tongue, they could become acquainted with them only at second hand. It might be too much to ask for a translation into a local dialect; but very soon demand would be made for translations into Latin and Aramaic and Coptic. Just when the demand was made in each case and how it was met, we do not know. Undoubtedly it was made as early as the second century; and probably, since the New Testament books had not yet been formed into one collection, the translations were of separate books in

different places and at different times. A very brief account of what we know about these versions is enough to show their bearing upon the problems of textual criticism.

In the Latin language the most famous version, which after various revisions became the authorized text of the Roman Catholic Church and still holds that place to-day, is the *Vulgate*—a name given to it in later days because then it was the version in common use. It was made by the great scholar, Jerome, who completed that part of it which contains the gospels about A. D. 383. Long before that time, however, the gospels had been translated into Latin; and one reason why Jerome was asked to undertake his version was because the text in different manuscripts was not the same. There are still existing, mostly as fragments, more than forty manuscripts giving us these earlier texts—one of which is the Latin portion of Codex D—and we can see how much they differ. Scholars are not yet agreed as to whether all these manuscripts are based upon one original version, and the differences arose through errors and alterations by copyists; or whether there were several versions differing from one another originally. And in case the theory of one version be adopted, it is disputed where that version was made—in Northern Africa, in Italy, or elsewhere. The name *Old Latin* or *Itala* has been given to the earlier version or versions by way of distinction from



the Vulgate. The text of this Old Latin is of the type already described as the Western, and represented by Codex D. In fact it was the prevalence of this type of text in early Latin manuscripts and in quotations by Latin Fathers, that led scholars to call it the Western, because they supposed it to be peculiar to Latin-speaking lands. A fuller knowledge has shown that it prevailed generally in the second and third centuries.

In the Aramaic language, which was spoken throughout the great land of Syria, there were many distinct dialects, among them that of Palestine; but the one in use at Edessa was the most literary, and is usually meant when we speak of the Syriac. The chief Syriac version is called the Peshitta, *i. e.*, the "simple," and holds a place in the Syrian language similar to that which the Vulgate holds in the Latin. It used to be extolled as "the Queen of Versions," and tradition declared that it was made by the evangelist Mark. Its supposed antiquity and the fact that its text was of the Syrian type, were arguments used in proof that the Syrian or Antiochian text, which our Authorized Version follows, is the original text. To-day it is generally agreed that the Peshitta is not much, if at all, earlier, than the fifth century, and that, like the Vulgate, it is a revision of earlier versions. Only two manuscripts of these earlier versions have been discovered, *viz.*, the Curetonian Syriac, so called from Dr. Cureton who discovered and edited it some fifty years ago, and the

Lewis Syriac or Sinaitic Syriac, a palimpsest discovered in 1892 by Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson on Mt. Sinai in the same convent where Tischendorf discovered Codex  $\aleph$ . The latter seems to be the earlier of the two versions; but their relation to one another and to the Diatessaron of Tatian is a vexed problem.

The text of these earlier Syriac versions is Western. In the Lewis manuscript certain readings in the first chapter of Matthew have attracted attention and been much quoted in recent discussions about the virgin birth of Christ. The readings are: "Joseph, to whom was espoused the virgin Mary, begat Jesus who is called the Christ" (verse 16), "She shall bear thee a son" (verse 21), "She bare him a son, and he called His name Jesus" (verse 25). These readings would tend to support the theory that the original text of Matthew represented Joseph as the father of Jesus; yet in the same manuscript we find unchanged the other statements of this chapter about the supernatural conception of Jesus. How shall we explain it? The translator or some later copyist may have deliberately altered the text, in which case the question arises, Were his alterations in the direction of orthodoxy or the reverse?—Did he seek to make the birth of Christ more divine or more human? But the theory of deliberate alteration fails to explain why the changes were not more thorough-going. Why should evident contradictions be left? Possibly the writer did not consider them to be contradictions, in which case the statement

of Joseph's fatherhood would be, like those in Luke 2 : 48 and Matt. 13 : 55, an ordinary way of speaking, which could not deceive the reader because the divine fatherhood was so clearly stated.

The Egyptian language (also known as the Coptic, a corruption of the word Egyptian) has several dialects, with versions in each of them. The age and origin of these versions and their relation to one another are problems still unsolved. The most important version is the Bohairic, which seems to be connected in origin with Alexandria. It is unique among the early versions in that it represents a Neutral and Alexandrian text. This fact has its evident bearing upon the question of the origin of the Neutral text.

### *III. The Fathers*

The third source of knowledge of the text is the Fathers, or, more exactly, Patristic Quotations. There is a great body of Christian literature older than any existing New Testament manuscript, and full of quotations from the New Testament. Such quotations ought to throw some light upon the text which each writer knew. Two difficulties, however, have to be reckoned with. First, the quotation may have been changed by a copyist to conform to a text with which he was familiar. This is most natural, whether done unintentionally or as a deliberate correction of a supposed mistake. Second, the author himself may not have quoted the Scriptures correctly. Sometimes his

intention may have been to give nothing more than the substance of a Scripture passage; and at other times, when he intended to give the precise words, his memory may have been faulty. Nothing is more common to-day than to hear misquotations of familiar Scripture passages even by well-educated Christians. But while the testimony of Patristic Quotations has to be taken with discrimination, it is of much value in determining both the date and the locality of various texts. "For instance, if we find a certain well-defined type of text in the Old Latin manuscripts and also in the quotations of certain African Fathers of the second and third centuries, we are obviously justified in saying that this form of Latin version was used in Africa in the second and third centuries. Whereas, if we had not the quotations, we should have very little certain evidence either as to date or place" (Lake, *Text of New Testament*, 48).

There is no need of entering upon a consideration of the testimony of the Fathers. Enough to say that in general the earlier ones bear witness to the use of the Western text everywhere, except in Alexandria where there is some evidence for the Neutral text. The later Greek Fathers seem to have used the Syrian text, while the Latin Fathers seem to have used the Vulgate.

Having considered the methods which critics adopt to secure a correct text of the gospels, we look with in-



terest to see what measure of success they have gained. However, in our emphasis of the subject we must not develop an exaggerated idea of the magnitude of their task. Westcott and Hort point out (and Gregory endorses their statement) that in seven-eighths of the New Testament there are no variations of text and no grounds for doubt. The problems of the greater part of the remaining eighth are wholly unimportant, arising from changes in order, differences in spelling, and the like. And in the field, thus restricted, where the textual critic must labor, the great majority of variations are comparatively trivial, since they do not change the meaning of the passage. "The amount of what can be called substantial variations can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text."

Concerning this debatable part of the text the agreement among critics is greater than might be expected. If we take Westcott and Hort's text as a standard for comparison, we shall find a few scholars who believe that it departs too far from the Syrian text, and many who think that it ought to incorporate more of the Western text. Nevertheless, the difference between it and the texts adopted by other modern scholars is inconsiderable. For working purposes it makes but little difference which one of the recent texts is followed. Moreover, no changes brought about in the text by critical study affect any of the doctrines of the New Testament. This is evident to the English reader



when he compares the Authorized Version with the Revised Version. In spite of all changes the two are practically the same book, giving the same facts, and teaching the same truths in the same way. If we wish to get close to the exact words which the New Testament writers used, we do well to study the Revised Version, especially the American Revised Version; but if we are seeking simply to lay hold upon the facts and doctrines of the New Testament, it makes little difference which version we take. With but few and minor exceptions they are the same in both.

In closing we may notice briefly the chief changes in the text of the gospels adopted by the best textual critics of to-day. They are interesting in themselves, and they illustrate the processes of textual criticism.

*Mark* 16 : 9-20.—While this ending to Mark's Gospel is found in most of the manuscripts, including Codices A, C, and D, it is omitted in B and 8, both of which end abruptly with verse 8, "For they were afraid." In B the copyist has left a blank column after this verse, thereby indicating that he knew of a further ending, but did not give it because it was not in the manuscript he was following. A very few manuscripts have a shorter ending which, with slight variations, is as follows: "And they reported briefly to those around Peter all the things commanded. And after these things Jesus himself (appeared to them and) sent

forth through them from the East, and as far as the West the holy and incorruptible proclamation of eternal salvation." But these manuscripts also add the longer ending with the note that it, too, is found after the words "For they were afraid." The later versions all give the longer ending; but the Lewis Syriac ends with verse 8, two manuscripts of the Bohairic Version give the shorter ending in the margin, and one Old Latin manuscript has only the shorter ending. There is also some testimony of the Fathers that doubt existed as to the genuineness of verses 9-16, though mostly they are silent about the passage.

The internal evidence, *i. e.*, the evidence from vocabulary and style, is not pronounced, but tends rather against Mark's authorship. The passage certainly is joined most awkwardly to what precedes, as if it originally stood independent of it. Add to this its emphasis of the necessity of baptism, and its description of miracles as mere marvels (both of which are characteristic of the thought of the second century rather than of the apostolic age), and we have strong reasons for rejecting the passage as not genuine, and for refusing to use it as an authority upon the events after Christ's resurrection. Whether the original ending of Mark was destroyed by some accident or was suppressed by the early church for some reason, or whether the book never was finished or was ended most abruptly at 16 : 8, we never shall know. From

some cause the book was incomplete; and the present longer and shorter endings are attempts to complete it. When and by whom they were made we can only guess. An Armenian manuscript was found recently in which the longer ending is separated from the preceding verses by a space and some flourishes, and bears the heading "Of the presbyter Ariston." There was an Aristion who lived at the beginning of the second century, and from whom Papias says he gained information about the Lord (see p. 40). Possibly he may have been the author of the passage, though we have only this single and late testimony to that effect. The shorter ending seems to have originated even later than the longer one, and we know nothing about its authorship.

*John* 7 : 53-8 : 11.—This story of the woman taken in adultery is precious to the Christian church, and harmonizes so completely with the character and work of Jesus that there is little question of its truth. Yet textual criticism shows plainly that it was not in the original gospels. It is absent from all the earliest manuscripts except D; and some of those which contain it, mark it with asterisks or obeli as suspicious. It wanders from place to place like an intruder, being found in the margin, or after 7 : 36, or at the end of the gospel, or in Luke after 21 : 38. The text varies considerably—the most curious reading being (8 : 8f): "He wrote upon the ground the sins of each single one

of them, and they, when they read it, being convicted by their conscience went out." It is found in none of the early versions except the Latin, and only some of the Latin Fathers know it. The evidence is conclusive against its belonging to the original text. And yet the story is undoubtedly a very early one. Eusebius (3 : 39 : 16), describing the writings of Papias, says: "He has likewise set forth another narrative concerning a woman who was maliciously accused before the Lord touching many sins, which is contained in the Gospel according to the Hebrews." Probably it should be put among the Agrapha as a true story of Jesus, which came down at first orally or in the discarded gospels, and finally was given a place in the canonical gospels.

*John 5 : 3-4.*—The angel troubling the waters of the pool of Bethesda is given by many authorities; but it is omitted by A, B, C, D, and  $\aleph$ , and seems to be evidently a note of some copyist, which afterward crept into the text. Without it there is need of explanation why the crowd gathered around the pool, and why a sick man must be the first to step into the troubled waters if he would be healed. The note gave the popular explanation, and is interesting for that reason.

*Luke 22 : 43-44.*—The evidence for and against this passage, which tells of the angelic ministry and the bloody sweat at Gethsemane, is pretty equally divided. If the passage was in the original text, its



omission in some manuscripts is hard to explain. But without it Luke's account is so lacking in emphasis of Christ's struggle and anguish that a copyist might well be led to insert the passage to supply the lack. Even so it may possibly be trustworthy. Westcott and Hort say: "It would be impossible to regard these verses as a product of the inventiveness of the scribes. They can only be a fragment from the traditions, written or oral, which were for a time, at least, locally current beside the canonical gospels, and which doubtless included matter of every degree of authenticity and intrinsic value."

*Luke 23 : 34a.* Very much the same may be said of this cry of Christ upon the cross as of the preceding passage, though the evidence in its favor is more strong. Certainly no one can question the truth of the narrative, whether we owe it to Luke or to a later writer. And if it was preserved for us by a later writer, then Westcott and Hort are right when they say of this and of *Luke 22 : 43-44* that they "may safely be called the most precious among the remains of this evangelic tradition which were rescued from oblivion by the scribes of the second century."



## CHAPTER VII

### THE DATE OF THE GOSPELS

No one of the canonical gospels is dated or bears the name of its author. The present titles are late, and the nearest approach to a statement of authorship is John 21 : 24. In this they differ from the apocryphal gospels, which usually make prominent the name of the author, and often state the circumstances under which the book was written. The difference is a valid argument for the genuineness of the canonical gospels, since a forger would have taken special pains to make an early date and apostolic authorship unmistakably evident.

Concerning the date of the gospels there has been, and still is, a great deal of dispute. Were they written in the lifetime of the apostles or, at least, of their immediate disciples, when the facts they narrate were fresh in mind, and many witnesses were still living to confirm the narrative; or were they written sometime in the second century, long after all witnesses were dead, and when the oral tradition had become distorted and unreliable? This is the problem we must discuss in the present chapter. As we take it up we shall do well to bear in mind that it never would have

arisen if the gospels had contained no account of miracles and no claim of divinity for Jesus. The arguments for an early date would be accepted without question were the supernatural left out of the books. But those who deny that miracles ever happen, and refuse to see in Jesus anything more than a human teacher, must in some way explain away these portions of the gospel narrative; and the easiest way to do so is to say that the gospels themselves were written too late to be trustworthy.

Church history has been likened to a road in which, soon after leaving the starting-point, we enter a dimly lighted tunnel, and have to proceed some distance before we emerge into the full light. The tunnel portion is the first half of the second century. For the apostolic age we have the writings in the New Testament, which—even if some of them are rejected as being of later date—throw a great deal of light upon the history of that period, though not enough to answer all the questions we would like to have answered. For the last half of the second century we have the voluminous writings of the apologists, which set forth clearly the condition of the church in that period. But for the first half of the second century we have only the scanty writings of the apostolic fathers, and possibly a few of the New Testament books; and from these we can gain little knowledge of how the church was progressing during those years.

There is no doubt whatever that the apologists had our gospels, and believed them to have been written in the first century. But proof that they really were written in the first century, and not, as sceptics affirm, in the first half of the second century—that tunnel period—is less overwhelming; indeed, it could not be otherwise, the period is so obscure.

The evidence for an early date must be cumulative: there is no single fact that can be adduced as conclusive, but there are numerous facts pointing toward such a date; and when combined their force is vastly greater than when taken separately. These facts may be grouped under two heads, *viz.*, external evidence, or what is gathered from any source other than the gospels, and internal evidence, or what the gospels themselves indicate. Each group is far too large for us to attempt even an outline of its contents. All we can do is to give a few items—enough to serve as a sample of the whole—and thus to indicate the way in which the proof is slowly built up, fact on fact, as a mason builds a wall by placing stone on stone.

### *I. External Evidence*

If we could find in the apostolic fathers—those writers of the first half of the second century—some mention of our gospels by name, or even some quotations that were unquestionably from our gospels, this would be the best possible proof that the books were

then in existence and in use by the church. But such proof is lacking. There is no mention of the gospels by name; and though there are statements that seem like loose quotations from them, they are not exact enough to be unmistakably such. For example, in I Clement 46—written perhaps about A. D. 97—is the following passage: “Remember the words of Jesus our Lord, for he said, Woe unto that man: good were it for him if he had not been born than that he should cause one of my elect to stumble. It were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about him, and that he should be sunk in the sea, than that he should cause one of my little ones to stumble.” This reminds us very strongly of Matt. 26 : 24 and 18 : 6, but we cannot be sure that Clement took it from that gospel. He may have used some other gospel or collection of the sayings of Jesus, or it may have come down to him by oral tradition. The same uncertainty as to the use of our gospels characterizes all the apostolic fathers. This is not surprising, if the canon was not yet formed. There was no reason why they should refer to the Four Gospels as recognized authorities, or quote their statements with literal exactness as inspired utterances. All this was to come later on.

Justin Martyr may be reckoned as the last of the apostolic fathers or the first of the apologists. He died about A. D. 166. He was a voluminous writer, though but few of his works remain. In them he

often quotes from what he calls the "Memoirs of the Apostles," which, he says, "are called gospels." These were books in general use by the church; for he tells us that "on the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs," etc. (First Apology 67). Were these memoirs our gospels? The evidence that they were is strong (see Fisher, "Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief," new edition 211). While Justin, as we have seen, tells certain things about Jesus that are not found in the gospels, he never refers to the memoirs for these; they seem to have been gathered from other sources. But in general his story of Christ is the same as that in the gospels; and though his quotations are not verbal reproductions of the gospel words, they are as nearly exact as his quotations from the Old Testament.

Tatian, who became a Christian in middle life, was a disciple and admirer of Justin Martyr. Somewhere about A. D. 170 he compiled a life of Christ which he called the Diatessaron (*i. e.*, "by means of four") because it was made by weaving together four accounts. If not originally in Syriac, it was soon translated into that language, and became very popular among the Syrian churches. In the fourth century Ephraem (from whom the Codex Ephraemi was named) wrote



a commentary upon it. But in the fifth century it was put under the ban because it was taking the place of the canonical gospels; and, though it was mentioned with more or less favor down to the fourteenth century, finally all traces of it and of the commentary upon it were lost. What could the book have been? Not many years ago hostile critics were confidently declaring that it certainly was not a compilation of the canonical gospels; and though one old writer had stated that it began with "In the beginning was the Word," which would indicate that Tatian used the Gospel of John, they jeered at this, because they were sure that the Gospel of John was not written until just about the time when Tatian was compiling the Diatessaron. They said that probably the Diatessaron was only a brief and imperfect life of Christ compiled from some of the apocryphal gospels; and as for Ephraem's commentary, they pointed out reasons for believing that it was not upon the Diatessaron at all but upon another book. It is instructive to mark their discomfiture.

In the suburbs of Venice was, and still is, an old Armenian convent whose monks were scholars. They had a library of manuscripts and a printing press; and in A. D. 1836 they printed one of their manuscripts—the works of Ephraem the Syrian translated into Armenian. In the book was the long-lost commentary on the Diatessaron. But no one seemed to notice this fact, probably because the book was in Armenian and

had no table of contents. Then forty years later they published the book in a Latin translation; and now one of our American scholars—Ezra Abbot—called attention to the commentary. Immediately it excited much interest; and Zahn undertook to reconstruct the Diatessaron itself from the quotations in the commentary. He did a fine piece of work; but something still better was in store. The publication of Zahn's work stirred up the librarian of the Vatican to examine his manuscripts; and he found to his delight that he had a copy of the Diatessaron itself, not indeed in the Greek or Syriac, but in an Arabic translation. He set to work to prepare this for publication, and while doing so learned from the Vicar Apostolic of the Coptic Church, who paid him a visit, that there was a similar manuscript owned by an Egyptian scholar. This second copy was secured for the Vatican; and in A. D. 1888 the Arabic text was published, and has since been translated into English. Now that we have the long-lost Diatessaron, what does it prove to be? A life of Christ, compiled from the canonical gospels, and from no other source, opening with "In the beginning was the Word," and containing the greater part of the first three gospels and nearly the whole of John. In other words, it is exactly the book that certain critics declared positively it could not be!

What conclusion should be drawn from the fact that Tatian used the canonical gospels and no others for

his Diatessaron? Evidently this, that in his day these gospels were generally known and accepted as authoritative by the church; otherwise he would not have selected them in preference to all others; and his book would not have been so popular. But for the gospels to gain such recognition requires time; and it is not easy to suppose that they had been written only a few decades earlier. Moreover, as we said, Tatian was a pupil of Justin Martyr, and he must have derived his idea of the value of the gospels from Justin Martyr. This confirms our belief that when Justin speaks of the memoirs of the apostles that were read everywhere in the churches, he means the canonical gospels. And it is equally hard to believe that if they were written during Justin's lifetime, he would have been of the opinion, as he was, that they "were drawn up by Christ's apostles and those who followed them" (Dialogue 103). As his lifetime goes back to the beginning of the second century, the argument is strong that the books were written in the apostolic age.

Irenæus, one of the most famous of the apologists, wrote, sometime before A. D. 190, a great volume in five books entitled "Against Heresies." In this he says:

"Matthew issued a written gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the church. After their departure [*i. e.*, death] Mark, the

disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke, also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel preached by him. Afterward, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a gospel while he abode at Ephesus in Asia" (Book 3, chap. I).

All scholars agree that by these four books are meant our Four Gospels; and Irenæus argues, in a way that seems to us fanciful, that it is not possible that the gospels can be more or less than four in number. But where did Irenæus gain his information? Some of it came from Polycarp, who died as a martyr in A. D. 155. Before he was put to death, he was told that his life would be spared if he would revile Christ; and he replied: "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he has never done me a wrong; how then can I speak evil of my king who saved me?" If by eighty and six years Polycarp meant the whole of his life, he was born in A. D. 69; if he meant the time from his conversion, which is more likely, he was born still earlier. Polycarp lived in Smyrna and was a disciple of the Apostle John, who died, it is generally agreed, about A. D. 100, when Polycarp was at least thirty years old. Irenæus, when a boy, met Polycarp; and this is what he says concerning him and his teaching:

"I could even describe the place where the blessed Polycarp sat as he discoursed, and his going out and



coming in, and his manner of life, and his personal appearance, and his discourses to the people, and the accounts he gave of his intercourse with John and the others who had seen the Lord, and how he remembered their words. Whatever he had heard from them about the Lord, about his miracles and his teaching, having received them from eye-witnesses of the Word of life, all this Polycarp related in harmony with the scriptures. These things, through the mercy of God which was upon me, I then listened to attentively, noting them down, not on paper, but in my heart; and continually, through God's grace, I recall them accurately" (Eusebius 5 : 20).

Polycarp, therefore, stands as a connecting link between Irenæus and the apostolic age. What he learned as a disciple from the apostle John, he passed on to his own eager boy disciple, Irenæus. To set aside the statement of Irenæus about the authorship of the gospels and their consequent date, involves the rejection of testimony as direct and weighty as any that could be imagined. Moreover, we must not speak of Polycarp as if he were the only link between the apostolic witnesses and later generations: he is simply one of a great number just as important, though their names are unknown.

These are but samples of the external evidence for the early date of the gospels. A full treatment of the subject would involve a careful examination of all the



writings preserved from the second century, an estimate of the historical value of each, and a due consideration of every statement they contain which in any way seems to bear upon the origin of the gospels. Like many of the topics we are studying, it would require a volume to itself. Enough for our purpose if we gain an idea of the way in which scholars pursue the investigation.

## *II. Internal Evidence*

By internal evidence is meant whatever indications of the time when they were written are found in the gospels themselves—in other words, what “water-marks of age” they bear. It is by no means easy—so literary criticism has repeatedly shown—to compose a document professedly of an earlier age, and hide all traces of its true date. Even the most careful and learned writer will make some slip that reveals the forgery. Especially difficult, as we shall see, would it have been in the second century to forge a document of the first century; and there is no probability that any of the Christians between A. D. 100 and 150 possessed the knowledge and literary skill to meet the difficulties. Of course, in an uncritical age a very clumsy forgery might pass unquestioned; but no books have ever been subjected to such searching examination as have the gospels in recent years. Friends and foes have gone over them minutely, scrutinizing every line, seeking to

determine whether they really are what the church has always supposed; and it would be indeed marvellous if they were late forgeries and remained still unexposed.

The internal evidence that they were written in the first century is two-fold:

(1) Their freedom from errors in historical facts.

The revolt against Rome which broke out in A. D. 66 and was crushed in A. D. 70, wrought a great transformation in Palestine. Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple worship was henceforth impossible, the Sanhedrin was dissolved, the sect of the Sadducees disappeared, the character of the Roman rule changed, and customs and manners were greatly altered. For a man of the second century to write a life of Jesus, in which all the details of his environment should agree accurately with a period so unlike that of the writer, would be a task involving much historical research. Present interest has led scholars to undertake such research; and every detail concerning Palestinian life in the time of Jesus that can be found anywhere has been carefully collected, so that now we know that period better than any writer since the apostolic age possibly could. And the result of the research has been to confirm the accuracy of the gospels. The statement by Luke concerning the first census under Quirinius (Luke 2 : 2-3) remains still a matter of sharp discussion, and its truth or error is not yet established; but Luke's trustworthiness as an historian, shown not only in his

gospel, but especially in the Book of Acts, was never more clearly recognized than to-day. In no other statement concerning the times of Jesus do we find it easy to maintain that the evangelists were in error. They give us a large mass of facts, and some of them very minute facts, about Judea and Galilee, the temple and its worship, the synagogue, the Sanhedrin, the different sects, the Messianic expectations, and other matters pertaining to political, social, and religious life in the time of Jesus. There is every opportunity for them to make a slip in their statements; but they never do. The inference, then, is fair either that they lived in the times about which they write, or else that they gained their story from faithful reporters who themselves lived in those times.

(2) Their freedom from anachronisms in theological thought.

The teaching of Jesus is the seed of all later Christian doctrine; but the development of doctrine was so rapid in the apostolic age that sometimes it is difficult to trace the connection between the theological thought of even the New Testament epistles and the teachings of Jesus. More than one scholar has boldly maintained that it was Paul and not Jesus who was the real founder of Christian theology; and some have gone still further and asserted that Paul and his companions misunderstood and perverted the simple doctrines of Jesus. Evidently, then, it would be difficult for a

writer whose whole training had been in the later theological atmosphere to avoid reproducing the thought familiar to himself and his associates, when he undertook to compose a life of Christ. Yet the gospels are remarkably free from such anachronisms. A few examples will make this evident.

(a) The use of terms.

In the gospels the word Christ is never a proper name; it is always a title, "the Christ," *i. e.*, the Messiah. But even Paul began to use it as a proper name, and soon that use was as common as it is to-day.

The Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven was a term that the apostles rarely used, because of the danger that it would be misunderstood by political authorities (*cf.* Acts 17 : 7); but the gospels represent Jesus as using it repeatedly.

On the other hand, the church is a term constantly found in the epistles; but it is found only twice in the gospels (Matt. 16 : 18 and 18 : 17), and its presence in these two passages is by some thought a later interpolation.

The Son of Man is a title which was seldom used in later days, probably because it seemed to emphasize the human side of Jesus; but in the gospels it is Jesus' favorite title for himself.

(b) The attitude toward miracles.

To the apostles, and still more to those of later days, the miracles of Jesus seemed the greatest proof of his



divinity; and they were accustomed to point them out and emphasize them. But the gospels represent Jesus as taking a totally different attitude toward them. He refuses to perform them simply as a proof of his divinity (John 6 : 30); he enjoins silence concerning them (Mark 5 : 43); he warns his disciples against overvaluing them (Luke 10 : 20); and he seems to regard them as sometimes a hindrance rather than a help in his work. Such an attitude would be almost beyond the power of a later disciple to imagine.

(c) The emphasis of the humanity of Jesus.

The worship of Jesus led to a constant emphasis of his divinity, and a reluctance to admit that he in any way shared human limitations and weakness; but we find little of this in the gospels. "The strongest argument against the view that the gospels are a product of the second century lies in the fact that no writer of that period would have ventured to represent Jesus in so thoroughly a human way as the evangelists represent him in the gospels. In these documents he is seen tempted as we are, subject to all the infirmities of the flesh; not laying claim to omniscience, since he frankly says he knows not the day or the hour of his return; nor yet to omnipotence, since he affirms that to sit on his right hand and on his left is not his to give. Nay, startling as it sounds to dogmatic orthodoxy, he declines even the title of 'good,' which is incidentally addressed to him—not, of course, that any one could



convince him of sin, still less that he was conscious of it himself, but because he was so thoroughly aware of his humanity and of the divine nature that stood over against it, that he could not allow for himself an appellation which is only appropriate to God.—It would have been impossible for him in any way to express more emphatically his true humanity” (Horton, “Teaching of Jesus,” 55).

(*d*) The lack of reverence for the apostles.

In the second century the apostles were set forth as models of wisdom and saintliness; all their human weaknesses and sins were ignored as being impossible for the wondrous founders of the church. The first trace of this process of idealizing can be found in Matthew and Luke. There is evident reluctance on their part to put down facts to the discredit of the apostles, and they sometimes offer excuses for apostolic conduct when such facts have to be put down. This will be pointed out more fully in a later chapter. But in all the four gospels, we find the apostles represented as far indeed from ideal saints. Peter denies his master with curses; James and John wish to call down fire on a village that will not receive them; all are slow to grasp Christ’s teachings, jealous of each other, lacking in faith and courage. They are very human men, with plenty of very human faults. There is no indication of the second century attitude toward them in the story of the gospels.

(e) Statements that seem contradicted by later history.

For example, in the missionary instructions to the twelve (Matt. 10 : 5-23), there are directions as to where and how they shall go, and what they shall take with them, that do not seem at all to agree with later apostolic missionary work. And again, in the prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem, there is the declaration that Jesus will return soon after that event, and in the lifetime of the present generation (Matt. 24 : 29, 34). Such statements are puzzles requiring study and explanation to harmonize them with the actual facts: if the gospels had been written in the second century, they would have been altered or omitted.

These are but samples of the great mass of evidence, external and internal. Putting it all together, the conclusion seems well supported that the gospels were written in the first century. Nearly all critics to-day accept this conclusion. Probably the latest of the four gospels was John; and concerning its date there has been prolonged discussion. Fifty years ago Baur and others were positive that John was not written before A. D. 170. But the advocates of a late date have been forced to draw back nearer and nearer the first century, until now the most strenuous would hardly try to defend a date later than 110-120 A. D., which would be certainly in the lifetime of John's immediate disciples, and

possibly in the lifetime of John himself, since tradition declares that he was but a lad when he followed Jesus and that he lived to extreme old age.

The desire is strong to go still further and fix an exact date in the first century for each gospel; but this is far more difficult. The evidence is entirely internal, and comes from emphasizing a few minute details. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that there is no general agreement among scholars. Perhaps the opinion of the majority would be that Mark was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, *i. e.*, before 70 A. D., Matthew shortly before or shortly after that event, Luke somewhat later, and John about the end of the century. But exact dates are not of supreme importance. It is enough to be assured that the gospels were written sometime in the first century. For down to the very end of that century there would still be living some eye-witnesses of Jesus' ministry, and a great multitude who had heard the story of that ministry from the apostles or other eye-witnesses. And it is impossible to suppose that these would receive and use our gospels, unless the facts therein reported agreed with the story of Jesus' life as they had learned it from these other sources.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

THE word gospel is the modern form of the Anglo-Saxon godspell, which is often explained as meaning good-story, but more probably means God-story. It is used as a translation of a Greek word (transliterated into English as evangel) meaning good news or glad tidings—a word which in many of the manuscripts is part of the title of each of the first four books in the New Testament. Accordingly we usually call each of those books a gospel. But the word properly denotes not a book, but the message contained in the book—the good tidings originally proclaimed by Jesus and published to the world by his disciples. Something of this meaning still remains in the word when used as a title; for instead of the gospel by Matthew, *i. e.*, the book written by him, the full title is the Gospel According to Matthew, *i. e.*, the good tidings as Matthew has sent them forth.

Whether each gospel originally had a title is doubtful. If it had, we cannot know what that title was; for in the oldest manuscripts "The Gospel" seems to have been the name for the whole collection, since

the separate books are headed simply "according to Matthew," "according to Mark," and so on, which shows that these headings were not given until the collection was formed. In any discussion, therefore, of the authorship of a gospel, we cannot use the title as conclusive evidence; it merely indicates who was supposed to be the author at the time when the title was adopted. It may represent a very early and reliable tradition; but it must be taken as nothing more than the opinion of some early scribe.

If the authorship assigned by the titles is correct the first gospel and the fourth were written by apostles, the second by a Jewish Christian, whose early home was in Jerusalem, and the third by a Gentile physician who never met Jesus, but was a companion of Paul, and must have known intimately many who had known Jesus. In this case all four evangelists had abundant opportunity to become acquainted with the facts they narrate, and every inducement to state them correctly; and their gospels ought to be first-class historical documents. It would seem, then, that all we have to do is to seek evidence confirming or disproving the traditional authorship.

The matter, however, is not as simple as it seems. A comparison of the first three gospels with one another brings before us a problem peculiar and very difficult; while a comparison of the fourth gospel with the first three discloses another problem quite different



but equally difficult. The former problem will be sufficient to occupy us in the present chapter.

The first three gospels seem to have been written by three different men at different times, and for different classes of readers. Each is so brief that at the utmost it can give only a few of Jesus' deeds and sayings, selected from a great mass of apostolic recollections, concerning which the naïve statement is made by the fourth evangelist, "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written" (John 21 : 25). We naturally expect, therefore, to find that the three gospels are made up of different selections, and have little in common. The fact is just the reverse. For example, Mark has comparatively few of the teachings of Jesus, but gives various important incidents in his life, from the imprisonment of John the Baptist down to the resurrection. Now these same incidents, often arranged in the same order and told sometimes in almost identical words, form the main part of the narrative in Matthew and in Luke. Indeed, the whole of Mark except two miracles (7 : 31-37; 8 : 22-26), one short parable (4 : 26-29), and various scattered verses, is to be found in Matthew or Luke or both. So great is the similarity of the three that in modern discussions they are called the synoptic gospels, or more briefly the synoptics; by which is

meant gospels giving a common view of the life of Christ, or gospels that for profitable study should be placed side by side and viewed together; and their authors are called the synoptists. Moreover, common to Matthew and Luke are many sayings of Jesus not given by Mark; and these sayings are even more exactly identical than the record of incidents.

As a result of this remarkable agreement we have to study the first three gospels as if they were to a large degree simply different forms of one book. We arrange their contents in parallel columns so that they can be constantly compared, and call such an arrangement a harmony of the synoptics. If we add John, and thus make a harmony of the Four Gospels, the peculiarity of the synoptics becomes still more evident, for John has very little matter in common with the other three; and parallel columns are usually impossible. In fact, there is nowhere else in biographical literature an instance of three books so similar and yet distinct. For, with all their close resemblances, the synoptics are distinct. Each relates or omits certain incidents and sayings not related or not omitted by one or both of the other two; and in a passage common to two or to all three the phraseology may be identical for a little ways, and then vary without any apparent reason. Each book has its individual character, its own way of treating a topic, and its special purpose; there is no possibility of identifying one with another.

Illustrations of all this are not necessary; any harmony of the gospels will give them. Of course, if the text is in English instead of Greek, the agreements and disagreements in phraseology are much concealed; yet some idea of them can be gained, even in English, by studying such a passage as the plucking of grain on the Sabbath (Matt. 12 : 1-8, Mark 2 : 23-28, Luke 6 : 1-5), especially if the text used is the revised version. As for the matter that is common to all three gospels, a very convenient collection of it is given by Lindsay as a prologue to the New Testament, published in "Everyman's Library."

The problem which this comparison of the synoptics forces upon the student is, How did these resemblances and differences arise? What theory of the origin and interrelation of the first three gospels will best explain why they are so remarkably alike and yet so evidently different? This is the synoptic problem which has confronted scholars as far back as the days of St. Augustine, and over which they still are working. Some of the proposed solutions of it we must now consider.

Of course, if we accept what is called the "dictation theory" of inspiration, and believe that the evangelist had no part in the composition of his gospel other than to write down word for word what the Holy Spirit suggested, there is no synoptic problem. For some inscrutable reason it was the will of the divine author

that these three books should thus agree and differ; no further explanation is necessary. But the dictation theory is held by few, if any, thoughtful men to-day. In whatever way the Holy Spirit aided the evangelist in his work (and that such aid was given is evident, when the canonical gospels are contrasted with the apocryphal), it is agreed that the human author had his own active and intelligent part to perform. He had to gather his information as other authors do, and to use his mental powers in sifting it and arranging it and putting it into words. And the synoptic problem centres in the question, From what source or sources did the synoptists gain their knowledge of the life of Christ, so that they wrote precisely the books we have?

One theory, advanced by St. Augustine, we may call that of mutual dependence. When the first evangelist, whichever he was, had written his gospel, the second used it as the basis of his work, following its order when this seemed best, adding new material or omitting what he did not care to repeat, copying the exact words or changing them at his pleasure. Then the third evangelist had one or both of the earlier works before him, and used them in the same way. This would seem to account very simply and naturally for the agreements and also for the disagreements. But as a matter of fact it does not; for when we seek to determine which gospel was first and which was second or third, serious difficulties arise. For example, Mat-



threw is much longer than Mark: then evidently—according to this theory—if it was written later, it is an enlargement of Mark: or if it was written earlier, it is condensed in Mark. But if it is an enlargement, why does it omit some important portions of Mark? Or, if Mark is a condensation, why does Mark give some of the common facts in much fuller form? And in either case, why should the copying be in one place very exact and in another full of alterations? There may be a measure of truth in this theory of mutual dependence; but it does not fully solve the synoptic problem. This is shown by the fact that scholars who adopt it cannot agree as to the order of writing of the gospels, or their relation to one another. Each of the three gospels has been given a first or second or third place in time, and each has been supposed to be dependent upon one or upon both of the other two; and yet none of these arrangements has fully solved the problem.

Another theory we may call that of common origin. This supposes that all three gospels are based upon a gospel now lost, and derive from it the matter they have in common. The lost gospel may have been a written one, for the opening statement of Luke, "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us," seems to refer to written gospels already in existence, though it is barely possible that the drawn-up narratives were oral. Was this lost gos-



pel in Greek, and did our evangelists simply take extracts from it; or was it in Aramaic, or even in Hebrew, so that our evangelists each had to translate from it? Both suppositions have been advanced—the former to explain the way in which the synoptics agree; the latter, the way in which they disagree. Evidently neither supposition is wholly satisfactory. Indeed, the advocates of the theory are forced to fall back upon the suggestion that the original gospel appeared in successive editions, and our evangelists made use each of a different one. But if there was a written gospel, the source of all three synoptics, we are puzzled to explain why so important a book—used by three evangelists as an authority—should have utterly disappeared. More probably the lost gospel was an oral one, or, in other words, the synoptists each made use of a common tradition concerning Jesus, which the church of their day possessed.

How this tradition or oral gospel came into existence can easily be imagined. The apostles remained in Jerusalem for comparatively a long time after the Day of Pentecost; and their preaching consisted mainly in telling the story of Jesus in such a way as to make men believe that he was the Messiah. The frequent repetition of this gospel story would tend to give it a stereotyped form; and the tenacity of Oriental memories would preserve that form when the hearers passed the story on to others. Thus unconsciously

before long there would arise a definite oral gospel. It would be a story of Jesus dwelling upon such incidents and teachings as were specially suited for evangelistic purposes. The deeper sayings of Christ, such as those recorded in the Fourth Gospel, would have no place in it, because they were not suited to an audience of unconverted men. When the Christians were scattered abroad, after the death of Stephen, they took the oral gospel with them. And when the synoptists undertook to write memoirs of Jesus, they naturally used the oral gospel as the foundation of their gospels, adding such additional information as they possessed, or thought to be important, and arranging the narrative according to their individual plans.

This theory is certainly correct in its supposition that the gospel originally must have been passed along in oral form, and doubtless was somewhat of the character described. But it does not solve the synoptic problem. For example, this oral tradition, since it originated in Jerusalem, must originally have been in Aramaic: how, then, does it happen that the synoptics, which are all in Greek, often agree "to the very finest shades of the Greek idiom"? Again, while the theory fails to account for the resemblances, it increases the difficulty of accounting for the variations; since, if the oral gospel was so stereotyped that it passed from hearer to hearer without any change of form, we can hardly suppose an evangelist would alter it when writ-

ing it down. Especially, what shall we say of the numerous passages common to Matthew and Luke, but not found in Mark: were they part of the oral tradition; and if so, why did Mark omit them? Moreover, there are indications that some written source was used by the synoptists. As an example of this, note how each account of the healing of the paralytic (Matt. 9 : 6, Mark. 2 : 10, Luke 5 : 24) has the same parenthetical explanation inserted in the midst of Jesus' words in a manner that is awkward even in a written account, and would be almost unintelligible in an oral account. These and other objections have caused most scholars to abandon the oral theory, though a few still advocate it.

The theory most popular at present is called the double source or two-document theory; and it possesses the strong points of both the preceding theories. It is based upon a passage in Eusebius which gives us two quotations from Papias, who wrote somewhere between A. D. 130 and 160:

"Mark, having become interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatever he remembered of the things said and done by Christ. For he had neither heard the Lord nor accompanied him; but afterward, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who used to suit his teachings to the needs of his hearers without attempting to give an orderly arrangement of the Lord's words, so that Mark cannot be blamed

for thus having written down some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he was careful—to omit nothing of what he had heard, and to state nothing falsely. These things are related by Papias concerning Mark. And about Matthew he says as follows: Matthew wrote [or compiled] the Logia in the Hebrew language; and each one translated [or interpreted] them as he was able” (“Church History, ” 3 : 39).

The word Logia means sayings, and is often used for divine utterances, *i. e.*, oracles; it may have been the term chosen for the utterances of Jesus as suited to their divine character. In the present discussion it may be left untranslated and used as a proper name.

We have already noted that the first things to be written concerning Jesus would be his sayings—both because they are not so easily remembered as his deeds, and because it is important to preserve their exact form. Matthew’s early training as a tax-collector would accustom him to make memoranda: and it is very probable that, either when he was with Jesus or afterward, he made such a collection of sayings, and naturally they would be in Hebrew—*i. e.*, Aramaic, the language in which they were spoken. Whether this Logia of Matthew contained simply the sayings of Jesus (like the papyri recently unearthed in Egypt), or whether some sayings were prefaced by accounts of the cir-

cumstances that called them forth, is disputed. The latter seems more likely, as often a saying would lose its force or its meaning apart from the circumstance. So far as we can judge, the sayings seem to have been arranged in groups, each related to some practical topic of Christian life, and intended for the use of Christians who wished to know and follow the teachings of Jesus on that topic. Perhaps these groups were circulated separately, as little manuals of Christian teaching, before they were brought together in one collection. In any case the Logia was not a gospel, but only a collection of Christ's sayings; it cannot, therefore, be identified with our Gospel of Matthew. However, the fact that it was written in Hebrew may explain the early and universal tradition that Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew; for that gospel in its present Greek form bears little indication of being a translation from a Hebrew original.

The book which Papias describes as written by Mark would be a gospel, and practically a reproduction of the oral gospel. It was the story of Jesus as Peter used to tell it for evangelistic purposes—such a story as that which he told Cornelius: indeed, the outline of Peter's story, given in Acts 10 : 37–41, would serve as an outline of Mark's gospel. Mark doubtless added to it details gained from other sources; in fact, the question most strongly discussed at present is, How far did Mark reproduce Peter's direct testimony? Whether



this book was our present gospel according to Mark, as Eusebius and Papias apparently believed, or was an earlier work of which our present gospel is a revision, is another question over which scholars dispute. Many think that the synoptic problem is more easily solved by supposing an earlier work—an Ur-Marcus; but others are disposed to accept the gospel in its present form as the original. Thus we account for one of the three synoptics, and give Mark special value as being the earliest of all our gospels.

The theory next supposes that these two documents—the Gospel of Mark and the Logia of Matthew (the latter, perhaps, already translated into Greek)—were used as the main sources of our other two gospels. The person who wrote the present Gospel of Matthew had come into possession of the two documents, and had also gathered, from either written or oral sources, other important facts about Jesus. It was natural that he should bring them together into one book. He was not trying to write a biography of Jesus; and he liked to arrange his material topically rather than chronologically. So in his book we find chapters devoted to the sayings of Jesus, such as the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables by the Lake, and other chapters devoted to the deeds of Jesus, such as the group of miracles in chapters eight and nine. There was no feeling on his part that the documents he was using were sacred; so, as he copied, he changed the

order or the wording to suit his purpose. Nor was there the feeling that when he used the words of another he must make it evident, or else be guilty of plagiarism. In that age, as we see from other books, the sin of plagiarism was not recognized: an author felt at liberty to use as much of another's production as he wished without any acknowledgment. Who the writer of the First Gospel was, we never shall know. Possibly it was Matthew himself. More probably it was a later author; and the name of Matthew was given to the gospel because it was considered to be simply an amplification of Matthew's Logia.

The theory also assigns a similar origin to the Gospel of Luke. In early days, all scholars supposed that the author of this gospel was Paul's companion, "the beloved physician," Luke. This is questioned by many recent critics, but all agree that he was the person who wrote the Book of Acts, and that he had more of the modern historian's spirit than any other evangelist. His preface states the care with which he collected his material; and his book shows an attempt to arrange it in something of a chronological order. His main sources, like those of Matthew, were the Gospel of Mark and the Logia; but he has drawn more from other sources than did the author of Matthew. He, too, follows Mark's order in his general arrangement of incidents, but he tries to put Jesus' sayings in an historical rather than a topical setting.

This in broad outline is the solution of the synoptic problem most popular with scholars to-day. They are by no means agreed as to its details. Was the source we have called the Logia really the book mentioned by Papias, or was it some other collection of Jesus' words? There is really nothing to connect it with Papias' statement except that it contained many sayings of Jesus, and Logia originally meant sayings. The recent tendency is to call it simply the source (Quelle) document, and refer to it as Q. Did Mark make any use of this source? Were there other sources common to Matthew and Luke? Did Luke have the Gospel of Matthew? How far were there successive revisions or editions of Matthew and Luke as well as of Mark? Questions like these are easier to ask than to answer; they are constantly discussed in the endeavor to account for all the complex phenomena presented by the synoptics; but even to state the minute details involved in such discussions would take too much space, and pass beyond the purpose of this book.

The fascination of the synoptic problem arises from the fact that it is an attempt to get behind our present gospels, and recover the earlier form of the gospel story out of which they grew. For centuries we have used the synoptics as original sources; now we find that common sources lie behind them, and we are eager to ascertain what these contained. For every step back-

ward brings us closer to the original statements of those who were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, and to the story of Jesus as it used to be told by the church in Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE JOHANNINE PROBLEM

No book in the Bible, unless it be Genesis, has given rise to so much discussion and controversy as the Gospel of John. The literature it has called forth is enormous; merely the titles of books and pamphlets would make a large volume. The main question, of course, is, How far can we accept this gospel as trustworthy? A few years ago critics seemed to be approaching an agreement about the answer; but recent writers are again far apart.

This is not surprising. Differences of temperament cause the book to make different impressions as to its value. For example, Dr. Philip Schaff feels it to be "the most original, the most important, the most influential book in all literature"; while Mr. John Stuart Mill contemptuously dismisses it—especially the speeches of Jesus, and in particular the speech after the Last Supper—as "mystical—poor stuff—matter imported from Philo and the Alexandrian Platonists, and put into the mouth of the Saviour." Evidently these two critics would never agree, because the book appeals to the one and does not to the other.



Still more dividing are differences in theological attitude. John sets forth the pre-existence and divine claims of Jesus far more plainly than do the other gospels. It is possible to accept the synoptics as in the main trustworthy, and yet see in Jesus simply a human teacher—one remarkable indeed, perhaps unique, but not divine. This is impossible with John: if the Fourth Gospel is trustworthy, we must believe that Jesus clearly showed himself to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. If, therefore, we have already come to some decision about the claims of Jesus (and no man can live in a Christian world without some decision, conscious or unconscious) we have thereby taken a definite attitude toward the Gospel of John—an attitude which, in spite of all attempts to weigh the evidence honestly and without prejudice, will influence our decision as to its trustworthiness.

This almost inevitable difference of opinion is best shown in a discussion of the authorship of the gospel. What was the relation of the Apostle John to the book? The answer, as in the question of date, must be determined by external and internal evidence.

The external evidence that the apostle was the author is strong. The earliest is at the end of the book itself: "This is the disciple that beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true" (21 : 24). This verse immediately follows the story accounting for the origin of

the report that Jesus had said John should not die; and it purports to be a declaration by some persons who knew John—possibly the elders of Ephesus—that the book is by him and is trustworthy. It is like the attestation clause to a will; and, like such a clause, it must be either a forgery or genuine. If it be a forgery, it is put in such a form as to weaken its force, since it omits names entirely. A forger would have put the matter clearly: "This book was written by the beloved apostle John, and we, the elders of Ephesus, bear witness to its truth." If it is not a forgery, then it is very early and strong evidence for John's authorship. Possibly it was an endorsement placed originally on the margin of the manuscript, and later transferred to the text itself.

There is abundant evidence that in the latter half of the second century—that period where we begin to have clear light upon church life and thought—everybody supposed the apostle John to be the author of the fourth gospel, except a few who rejected the teachings of that gospel. The statement of Irenæus, already quoted (p. 92), is a good example of such evidence. But hostile critics refuse to accept the external evidence or find various ways of diminishing its force. For example, in reply to the argument from Irenæus they point out that according to Papias (see p. 40) there was a presbyter John as well as an apostle John, and argue that Irenæus may have meant the

presbyter, or at least have confounded the apostle with him.

The internal evidence is also strong. Dr. Westcott in the introduction to his commentary on John shows from the book itself that the author must have been (1) a Jew; (2) living in Palestine in the first century; (3) an eye-witness of what he describes; (4) an apostle; and (5) no other than the apostle John. It is a fine piece of critical work, in which other scholars have followed him; and the argument should be studied as a whole for a due appreciation of its force. Nevertheless, critics who do not wish to be convinced by it, are not convinced: and a recent one (Jülicher) declares that the one unassailable proposition from internal evidence concerning the fourth gospel is that its author was not the apostle.

With the same external and internal evidence before them, we see that scholars reach very unlike conclusions. The majority, perhaps, would say that John himself wrote or dictated the gospel; but others hold that some disciple, before or after John's death, wrote down the story as he had gathered it from the apostle, or else made use of some narrative prepared by John as the basis of the present gospel. Others would admit of no connection between the apostle and the book, and suppose that the author was another John—whom later thought confounded with the apostle—or else some unknown person who tried to give his work a

semblance of apostolic authorship. "Possibly the question may never get beyond this unsatisfactory condition; possibly it may be settled conclusively by the discovery of some lost book. Meanwhile, pending such happy discovery, men will continue to differ according to their intellectual and religious idiosyncrasies (Bruce, "Apologetics," 467).

After all, the authorship does not determine the trustworthiness of the book as fully as we might at first suppose. If a disciple of John wrote it, he may have given with great accuracy the facts he learned from John. And even if the author had nothing to do with John he may himself have been a disciple of Jesus, as Papias says the presbyter John was, or the sources on which he relied may have been just as good as John's reminiscences. For, on the other hand, it is possible that with John himself as author, the book is not trustworthy. He may have idealized his Master to such a degree that his account is really a romance; or in his old age he may unconsciously have adopted myths and legends, then current in the church, so that his testimony is little better than that of a later historian. It is easier, of course, to dispute John's authorship than his accuracy; but the real problem is presented by the book itself, and authorship is only one step toward solving it.

The problem presented by the Fourth Gospel—the Johannine problem—is precisely the opposite of that

presented by the first three gospels—the synoptic problem. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the synoptic problem, is Why are the first three gospels so remarkably alike? The Johannine problem is, Why is the Fourth Gospel so remarkably unlike the first three? Two biographies or two sketches of the same subject may properly be expected to differ: but John differs so greatly from the synoptics that we are forced to ask, Have we, indeed, the same Christ in John as in the other gospels; and if we have, how are the differences in these accounts of him to be explained?

The differences must be considered somewhat fully. And for convenience we may put them in three groups, viz., the details of the public ministry, the teachings of Christ, and his self-revelation.

### *I. Differences in the Details of Christ's Ministry*

(1) *Its Locality*.—According to the synoptics, Jesus remains in Galilee and the coasts until he comes up to Jerusalem to die; according to John, he is mainly in Jerusalem and Judea, though occasionally he withdraws into Galilee or across the Jordan.

(2) *Its Beginning*.—The synoptics all date this from the time when the Baptist was cast into prison; but John describes a period of work before the imprisonment, a part of which was occupied in doing very much the same as the Baptist was doing—preaching and baptizing.



(3) *Its Length*.—The synoptics tell of but one Passover (the final one) which would indicate a ministry of not more than one year; but John tells of three Passovers, and possibly of four, which would indicate a ministry of at least two years and perhaps three. Three is the popular view; but I think two is held by the best scholars to-day.

(4) *Its Success*.—According to the synoptics, Jesus at first meets with great success; multitudes flock to him; his words are heard with approval; he carries everything by storm; and it is not until later on that popular favor deserts him, after he has refused to become the kind of king the people clamor for. Then he seems to recognize that his work is all in vain, and begins to prepare his disciples for the cross which awaits him. According to John, he meets with bitter opposition from the very outset, and in his first teaching at Jerusalem speaks of the death which his enemies will inflict upon him; and this opposition continues, growing only more bitter till the end.

(5) *Its Characters*.—Many of the leading characters in John's story are not mentioned by the synoptics. We may identify Nathanael with Bartholomew; but nowhere in the first three gospels do we hear of Nicodemus, or Lazarus, or the Woman of Samaria; while Thomas, who is so well known to us from the Fourth Gospel, is only a name in the first three.

(6) *Seeming Contradictions*. — Certain particular

statements in John are hard to reconcile with those in the synoptics. The most noteworthy of these is that concerning the day of our Lord's death. From the first three gospels we should conclude without doubt that Jesus ate the Passover at the time when the other Jews did, and died the following day; but John seems to state with equal clearness that he died on the day when the Jews were preparing their Passover, at the time when the Paschal Lamb was slain to be eaten that evening, and, therefore, his Last Supper was on the evening before the Passover.

## *II. Differences in the Teachings of Christ*

(1) *In Form.*—(a) Instead of short, incisive sayings or groups of sayings loosely connected, John gives elaborated addresses on particular themes, *e. g.*, the Bread of Life, the Departure of Jesus, and the Coming of the Comforter. And instead of parables there are allegories such as the True Vine, the Good Shepherd, the Door of the Sheepfold.

(b) The key words of Christ's teachings are unlike those in the synoptics, but identical with those in the Epistles of John; *e. g.*, light, darkness, life, death, witness, the world, to know and to believe. Moreover, the style is exactly the same as that of the epistles or the prologue of the gospel—a Hebrew style in which the statements are brief, simply framed, and connected with the constantly repeated copula “and.” Indeed

it is not always easy to tell where the statements of Jesus end and those of the evangelists begin. What portions of the third chapter, for instance, should be assigned to Jesus and what to John?

(2) *In Subject-Matter.*—(a) Certain topics emphasized in the synoptics are hardly mentioned in John. For example, the Kingdom of God is nowhere found except in the talk with Nicodemus; and instead of the second coming of Christ is usually the coming of the Comforter. There is complete silence about demoniacs, save as the charge is made that Jesus has a demon.

(b) The mission of Christ, instead of being restricted, as in the synoptics, to the Jews, is a universal and eternal one. He has other sheep not of this fold: he is the light of the world: he will draw all men unto him.

(c) The teachings of Christ in the synoptics are simple and generally practical; in John they are theological and most profound. For this reason, John even in the early centuries was called "the Spiritual Gospel," and has been likened to the inner sanctuary of the temple. It presupposes an intuitive perception of the deepest religious truths when these are presented without explanation or comment.

*III. Differences in the Self-revelation of Christ*

(1) *Progress in the Revelation.*—In the synoptics we find a slow and orderly advance in Christ's unveiling of his mission and claims. He begins by preaching the Kingdom of God, but says nothing about himself as the King—the long-expected Messiah. He checks the demoniacs when they would proclaim him the Son of God. He waits patiently for the time when there shall dawn upon his disciples a recognition of what he is; and he rejoices greatly when Peter—far along in the course of the ministry—pronounces him to be the Messiah, the Son of God; but even then he charges them to say nothing publicly about it. And only in the last week of his life does he throw away all reserve, and announce his divine claims to any who may listen.

In John there is no such progress: all is evident from the outset. The Baptist points out Jesus as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (1 : 29). His disciples at the very outset hail him as the Son of God, the King of Israel (1 : 49). To the woman of Samaria, looking for the Messiah, he says: "I am He" (4 : 26). And in his public discourses from the very beginning he emphasizes his divinity. Even the sacramental teachings concerning eating his flesh and drinking his blood are given in the discourse on the day after the feeding of the five thousand; and John

wholly omits any institution of the sacrament in connection with the Last Supper.

(2) *The Means of the Revelation.*—In the synoptics the miracles are primarily a manifestation of the sympathy of Jesus, or, at the utmost, of his power and authority. In John they are a revelation of his divine, pre-existent glory (John 2 : 11). The very first one—the changing of water into wine at Cana—causes his disciples to believe on him. They are wrought in harmony with his eternal nature—the blind man is given sight because he is the Light of the World (9 : 5); Lazarus is raised from the dead because he is the Resurrection and the Life (11 : 25). So, too, his other deeds are related to the heavenly world to which he belongs; *e. g.*, he washes the disciples' feet, "knowing that he came forth from God and returned to God" (13 : 3).

(3) *The Fulness of the Revelation.*—In the synoptics Christ reveals himself as the Messiah; but whether this means more than that he is the one whom God has specially chosen and anointed with his spirit to bring in the Kingdom of God, is debatable. In John no ground is left for such debate. He plainly proclaims himself as existing before Abraham (8 : 58), as the Way, the Truth and the Life (14 : 6), as one with the Father (10 : 30). The Jews are ready to stone him for blasphemy because he makes himself God (10 : 33). No clearer, fuller revelation of his unique divine re-



lationship to the Father could be demanded. The disciple who comes to Jesus through accepting John's representation of him, must say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (20 : 28).

Can these many differences between John and the synoptics be explained, and the two accounts be so harmonized that we may accept both as trustworthy? Able critics answer no; and reject John as historically worthless. It is well to notice, in considering their decision, that most of them are likewise dubious about the trustworthiness of the synoptics, and are unwilling to accept without modification the picture of Christ there presented. From this we may infer that the real difficulty with John is not its difference from the synoptics, but its clearer presentation of the divinity of Christ, which they refuse to recognize even in the synoptics. Equally able critics, however, accept and defend John, finding the same divine Saviour of the world in it and in the synoptics. Their explanation of the differences between the two must now be considered.

Before we take up the solution of the Johannine problem offered by defenders of the Fourth Gospel, we should notice that, perhaps, the problem is not quite as difficult as some would make it appear. The differences between John and the synoptics are sometimes exaggerated. Though the style of Christ's

words in the synoptics is usually unlike that in John, yet there are passages in which it is identical; *e. g.*, "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father; and no one knoweth the Son save the Father, neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him": this is from Matthew (11 : 27), yet nothing could be more like John. Concerning the difference in the teachings of Christ, the opinion of Wendt is valuable, not only because his book, "The Teaching of Jesus," is a very able one, but because he approaches the subject as a hostile critic, refusing to grant apostolic authorship for much of the narrative in the Fourth Gospel. Stalker summarizes Wendt's conclusions as follows: "St. John has a peculiar vocabulary; but its leading catchwords are simply equivalents of the leading catchwords of the synoptists; and the circle of Christ's teachings in John when laid above the circle found in the synoptists, corresponds with it point by point, although, of course, at some points St. John is more expansive and goes deeper" ("Christology of Jesus," 252). In regard, also, to the revelation of himself the difference may be less than it seems. The slow development which we trace in the synoptics is in the hearers and not in himself; for we believe that Christ was as fully aware of his Messianic nature at the beginning of his ministry as at the close. And the Gospel of John indicates just such slow development.

Far on in the second year of his preaching the Jews come to him saying, "How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly" (10 : 24; cf. 7 : 40-41). Evidently the proclamation to them had not been as unmistakable as we might think.

Nevertheless, serious difficulties in the attempt to harmonize John with the synoptics remain and cannot be ignored. Two facts, however, are helpful because they throw light upon the character of the Fourth Gospel. The first is that its author was acquainted with the synoptic account, and intended his work to be supplementary to it. This is what early writers state; *e. g.*, Clement of Alexandria, who wrote about A. D. 200, says: "John, perceiving that what had reference to the body [*i. e.*, the external facts] was clearly set forth in the other gospels, and being urged by his friends and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual gospel" (Eusebius, 6 : 14 ). And this is what the book itself indicates at the very outset, where the early work of John the Baptist and his baptism of Jesus, and the persons who form the first band of disciples, are treated as well-known to its readers. With the exception of the early Judean ministry, which the synoptics omit, there is no attempt at a continuous narrative: typical scenes are given without their connection. The second fact is that the purpose of the book is unlike that of the synoptics. This we must consider more at length.

The synoptics were written, as we have noted, mainly to preserve and spread the oral gospel. They are not attempts at biography, but precious memorabilia which practical experiment had found most valuable in making converts to the Christian faith or in fashioning the daily Christian life. The purpose of John is plainly stated at the close of the book (20 : 30): "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." Why there was need to write such a book is evident. The church at first had no theory concerning the way in which the human and the divine were joined in Christ. It accepted him as the Son of God without seeking to explain the nature of that Sonship. But before a great while there was forced upon it the problem over which men have pondered ever since, In what sense was Christ one with God—the Godman? And various theories were propounded that, without rejecting him as Saviour, diminished either his perfect humanity or his perfect divinity. The prologue of John (I : 1-18) has reference to these, and shows what the book wishes to prove, *viz.*, that Jesus was God become flesh, dwelling among us with the evident glory of the Only Begotten from the Father, and that in him alone is spiritual life. The whole book is a sermon on this text. Its object is to supple-

ment the synoptics by setting forth the divinity of Christ more plainly than they had done, and thus to furnish an answer to those within the church itself who were questioning whether Jesus was, in a full sense of the term, the Son of God. Indeed, the prologue to John seems an appropriate introduction rather to a theological discussion than to a biography.

When we fairly recognize the supplementary and special character of the Fourth Gospel, its peculiarities cease to be remarkable. Consider first its difference from the synoptics in the details of the public ministry. There is no indication that the synoptists did not know of Jesus' work in Judea at the beginning, and of his visits to Jerusalem later on. Indeed, such a statement as his cry over Jerusalem, "How oft would I have gathered thy children" (Matt. 23 : 37), would be unintelligible if the final Passover visit was the first one. Nor is it fair to infer from their failure to mention any Passover except the last that they supposed the ministry to be limited to one year. Mark expressly states that the feeding of the five thousand took place in the time of green grass—the time of the Passover; and since he tells of a long ministry after that miracle, he cannot have supposed that it was in the springtime of the last Passover.

The synoptists, as we have noted, do not give or profess to give a complete record of Christ's words and deeds; nor do they attempt (though this is not entirely



true of Luke) a chronological arrangement of their narratives. Why they omit all mention of the work in Judea and Jerusalem, except during Passion Week and possibly some isolated incidents such as the visit with Mary and Martha (Luke 10 : 38-42), we can only surmise. But that work was comparatively brief; it seemed a complete failure; and probably the synoptists or their sources saw in it nothing of special interest and importance—at least, nothing that should be related in preference to other portions of the ministry.

The writer of the Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, saw in the Judean work much that suited his purpose exactly. He wished to set before his readers the divinity of Jesus; and, as we shall presently see, there was no place where Jesus proclaimed his divine nature and mission so clearly and boldly as at Jerusalem, “the theological centre of the nation,” in the great feasts where representatives of the Jewish race were assembled from every quarter.

It was natural, therefore, that incidents from the work in Judea should constitute the chief part of the Fourth Gospel. And, this being the case, it was inevitable that the story should differ as to characters, incidents, and measure of success from that which the synoptists related. Any harmony of the gospels will show how the two narratives fit into each other. A discussion of special instances in which they seem at first sight to be contradictory would take too much

time. The commentaries on John will suggest how these can be harmonized. Even the most difficult of all—the time of the Last Supper as related to the Passover—is simply explained, if we suppose that because of the great number of pilgrims coming to the Passover, it was allowable—indeed, would seem to be necessary—for some to sacrifice and eat the Passover lamb in advance of the regular time, and that Jesus was one of those who thus anticipated the regular day and hour in eating the Passover meal.

In regard to the differences in the form of the teachings of Christ, I suppose we must agree that the style and keywords are those of John rather than of Jesus. And the natural conclusion is that though John gives us the thought of Jesus, he clothes it in his own words. In one way that is true of all four gospels. They are written in Greek; but Jesus spoke in Aramaic—the common language of the people of Palestine; so we do not have his original words when we read the Greek gospels any more than we do when we read our English revised version; in both cases we are using a translation. The cry on the cross, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,” the command to Jairus’s daughter, “Talitha cumi,” are exact reproductions of Christ’s own words; but such examples are rare. Moreover, in the long discourses in which John’s gospel abounds, we probably have not simply a translation of Christ’s words, but a summary of them without any attempt

to reproduce their exact form. True, they are put on Jesus' lips in what rhetorically is called direct discourse. But we must remember that the Hebrew language never developed indirect discourse, and used the first person just as much when giving only the general meaning of a speaker as when giving his precise words. (See Robertson, "Early Religion of Israel," 2:176.) So it would seem perfectly proper to a man who was more familiar with Hebrew than with Greek, to write, *e. g.*, "Jesus said 'I am the Bread of Life,'" where another writer would express it, "Jesus said that he was the Bread of Life." We ought not to accuse John of putting into Christ's mouth words that he never spoke, for that is something John had no intention of doing. Nor ought we to be troubled if we have not the precise words of Jesus. If we had them, they would be unintelligible except to scholars who could read Aramaic; and most of us would still have to depend upon the words of a translation. Enough if we possess in Greek or English the exact teachings of Jesus, though the words are those of John or of English translators.

How, then, about the teachings themselves? Granting that Wendt is right when he says that they cover exactly the same circle of truth as those in the synoptics, why are they so much deeper and more spiritual in John? Several facts may explain this.

First, the synoptics and John were for different

readers. The synoptics, as we have seen, are drawn from sources that were purely evangelistic—like Peter's oral gospel, or that were for the guidance and cheer of beginners in the Christian way—like Matthew's Logia. Evidently in such sources there would be little place for the deeper things of Christ. An unconverted audience would not be interested in these deeper things; and those who had advanced but a little way in the Christian life would not profit by them. But John was written for maturer Christians—for those who already were pondering such subjects as the union of the human and the divine in Christ; evidently such readers were ready to profit by a teaching that set forth the deepest truths. Even in the present day, the Fourth Gospel appeals rather to the Christian of ripe experience and full spiritual development than to the beginner or the unbeliever.

Second, the apostle John—if the Fourth Gospel comes directly or indirectly from him—may have been more receptive of deep truths than the other apostles. The teachings of Jesus varied according to the character of his hearers, being sometimes hidden in parables and sometimes open (John 16 : 29), now dwelling on the simple truths and duties of daily life, and again interpreting the mysteries of the Kingdom of God (Mark 4 : 11). He spake to the people and to his own intimate disciples as they were able to hear (Mark 4 : 33, John 16 : 12). This was natural, and is ex-



actly what all wise teachers do. The difference in the teachings of Jesus would be no greater than that between a sermon by a modern preacher to an audience gathered from the streets, and a quiet talk by the same preacher to his own church people at a Lenten service. Now, it is certain that Jesus gave his deepest teachings to the little band of apostles; and it is probable that John was by nature more appreciative of these teachings than were the others. He was the nephew of Mary who pondered such things in her heart (Luke 2 : 19, 51); when he became a disciple he was, so we suppose, scarcely more than a lad, and correspondingly receptive: and he was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who leaned upon his bosom. If any gospel was to reveal the heart of Christ, it would be one prepared by such an apostle. And the difference between the teachings of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel and in the synoptics is explained in part by the difference between the biographers.

Third, the deeper meaning in Jesus' teachings may have become evident to John in later years. John wrote his gospel long after the others and in his old age. For years he has been meditating upon the teachings of Jesus, and interpreting them according to his own deepening spiritual experience. Christ's promise of the Comforter who should teach his disciples all things and bring all things to their remembrance has been fulfilled to John. So in the words of



Jesus he sees meanings that he failed to see at first; they have grown more clear and wonderful as the years have gone by. How natural, then, that as he writes them down, he should try to give their full significance as it now appears to his mind illumined by the Holy Ghost. Indeed, Browning, in his "Death in the Desert" (concerning which Sanday says, "As an imaginative reproduction of the circumstances and frame of mind in which the gospel was written, it is the best that I know"), makes the aged apostle declare that this was the main reason why he wrote:

"Since much that at the first, in deed and word,  
Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,  
Had grown (or else my soul was grown to match,—  
Fed through such years, familiar with such light,  
Guarded and guided still to see and speak)  
Of new significance and fresh result;  
What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars  
And named them in the gospel I have writ."

The third group of differences—those found in Christ's self-revelation—may be accounted for along the lines already indicated. Whether his divine nature and Messianic mission were known to Jesus before his baptism is a question open to debate: but few, except those who reject the story of the baptism, can doubt that from the time of the baptism he had full knowledge of his nature and work. His disclosure of that knowledge to others would depend upon their condition. If their idea of the Messiah was a misleading

one, the statement "I am He" would be harmful rather than helpful. For example, in Galilee the people seem to have been expecting a Messiah who would gratify their longings for material prosperity, idleness, and self-indulgence; the five thousand whom he fed one springtime afternoon were quick to decide that this was a king after their heart's desire; and even the twelve sympathized with them. Accordingly, the work in Galilee had to be restricted to teaching the true nature of the Kingdom of God; not until the Galileans should grasp that truth—and they never did—could he proclaim himself the king. On the other hand, the Samaritans, who drew their idea of the Messiah wholly from the Pentateuch, were looking for a teacher like Moses (Deut. 18 : 15, John 4 : 25), who should lead them into all truth; and there was no reason why Jesus should not say plainly to the woman at the well, "I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4 : 26).

The degree, then, to which Jesus would reveal himself to the Judeans and especially to the Sanhedrin, who controlled all Judean thought, would depend upon their preparation for that revelation. Evidently they were not ready to receive such a Messiah as Jesus; but there seems to have been no preliminary work of preparation lacking to make them ready. The priests who had turned the temple into a robber's den needed no further instruction before they should be confronted with the question whether they would accept one who

would treat it as the Father's house. The rabbis who claimed the authority that came from professing to sit in Moses' seat knew well enough that when the Messiah appeared their proud prerogative must be surrendered. And the Pharisees, whose sweet sense of self-righteousness was fostered by emphasis of every jot and tittle of the law, looked forward to a king who should be the new lawgiver. There was no need to wait for further preparation—except, indeed, the preparation of repentance which the Baptist preached—before Jesus should proclaim his Messiahship to the Judeans.

The work in Judea began with the cleansing of the temple—an act that called immediate attention to the claims of Jesus, and challenged the authorities to do their duty as leaders of the people by passing upon those claims. And at every subsequent visit to the home of the Sanhedrin there was a fresh challenge, in the form of further Messianic work or teachings. Very probably Jesus, from the beginning, had little hope that the Sanhedrin would accept him; but they must not be left in ignorance of what he was and what he sought from them. When they at last, in the name of the nation, should pronounce him an impostor worthy of death, their act must be without the excuse that he had not clearly set before them his credentials. The difference, then, between his self-revelation, here and elsewhere, is natural.

And yet there are various indications in this same Gospel of John that the revelation was not as unmis-takable as at first we might suppose. For example, Nicodemus, despite the cleansing of the temple, sees in Jesus only a teacher come from God. And far along in the ministry, as we have noted, the Jews (by which term John designates the leaders at Jerusalem) come round about him with the question, "How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly" (John 10 : 24). Here, again, we must recognize that the Fourth Gospel is not a biography, but an interpretation. John sets forth the inner meaning which lies beneath the outward act. He shows us Jesus, not as the Jews actually saw him, but as they might have seen, had they in spirit been prepared to see. For example, when the Baptist, pointing out Jesus, says "Behold the Lamb of God,"—a term taken from Isaiah 53 : 7—John puts into that term its fulness of meaning by adding "that taketh away the sin of the world" (1 : 29). Or, again, in the enigmatical words of Jesus, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (2 : 19)—whose surface meaning seems to have been the one indicated by Mark (14 : 57)—John finds a deeper meaning revealed by meditation upon his death and resurrection. The conversation with Nicodemus illustrates clearly the way in which, when John reports the teachings of Jesus, "reminiscence deepens uncon-



sciously into reflection," till we can hardly tell where he ceases to be the reporter and becomes the expositor. With such treatment of the ministry of Jesus there can be little progress in his self-revelation, because the attempt is to show, not the development of faith in his disciples, but the grounds for their faith; and these existed unchanged from the beginning.

Such are the lines along which those who accept the Fourth Gospel as trustworthy arrive at a solution of the Johannine problem. To many critics the solution seems unsatisfactory; and in their opinion the difference between the picture of Jesus in John and in the synoptics arises from the fact that John is almost wholly unhistorical—a product of theological speculation at the close of the first century. It is well to notice, however, that usually the factor most influential in shaping this opinion is the conclusion, reached in advance, that the main thesis of John—the divinity of Jesus—cannot be accepted. Certainly many of the arguments used by hostile critics have little weight apart from such a decision. Illingworth points this out forcibly in one instance: "An eminent critic [Holtzmann, 'Life of Jesus,' 40; see also Jülicher, 'Introduction to New Testament,' 421], after contrasting the Sermon on the Mount with a passage in one of the Johannine discourses, says, 'It is a psychological impossibility that these two things should have proceeded from the same person.' This has all the air



of a scientific statement; but mark what the assertion involves—the adequate capacity of the critic to judge what was or was not possible in another person's mode of thought and speech. Now we should hardly be disposed to concede such a degree of insight to the ablest of critics in a case where the person criticised was a man of supreme genius like Plato or Shakespeare or St. Paul; for it is the characteristic of such men to baffle ordinary expectation, and scatter the prosaic tests of weight and measure to the winds. But would any man, with the faintest reputation for sanity to maintain, claim this insight if he believed the person in question to be God incarnate, or even possibly to be God incarnate? Obviously not. It is plain, therefore, that the incarnation had been ruled out of court before the assertion in question was made" ("Doctrine of the Trinity," 25).

After all, the strongest proof that the Jesus of the synoptics is the same as the Jesus of John, lies in the fact that the Christian Church has never been conscious of any real difference. Knowing him by personal experience, and convinced of his divinity by proofs far stronger than any fragmentary record of what he did and said almost nineteen hundred years ago, it has studied that record in the first three gospels and again in John, and found throughout them all, the same elder brother, Saviour and Son of God, whom to know is life everlasting.

## CHAPTER X

### CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH GOSPEL

THE Four Gospels give four different pictures of Jesus. The early church recognized this and symbolized the four by the four living creatures standing around the throne of God in the apocalyptic vision (Rev. 4 : 7; *cf.* Ezek. 1 : 10), *viz.*, the man, the lion, the ox, the eagle. There was some disagreement about the assignment of these symbols, though usually Matthew was the man because it pictures Jesus as the Son of David, the Messiah; Mark was the lion because it pictures him as the mighty miracle-worker; Luke was the ox because it shows him as the patient, self-sacrificing Saviour; and John was the eagle because in it he is most plainly revealed as the sublime Son of God.

Unless the gospels differ entirely from all other biographies, they must have each its own characteristics which might properly be symbolized. Even when two authors have equal opportunity to gain a knowledge of their subject, and equal ability to state it, there will be a difference in their books arising from temperament. Things that appeal to the one and are put in the foreground, may be almost ignored by the other

because they do not appeal to him. From what we know of Peter and John—two apostles so unlike in temperament—we cannot expect that the Gospel of Mark, which is practically Peter's story of Jesus, will contain the same incidents or give the same emphasis as the Gospel of John. Then, again, the same material may be treated very differently by a writer who has one purpose in writing or one audience in mind, and another writer who has a different purpose or audience. Matthew wrote for the Hebrews and to set forth Jesus as the Messiah; Luke wrote for the Gentiles and to set forth Jesus as the Saviour of all men: evidently their two books will not give the same picture of Jesus. Each gospel, therefore, must differ from the others: and its account of Jesus must be interpreted in the light of its authorship before it can convey its full meaning.

All this is familiar to us in the case of other biographies, but we sometimes forget it in the case of the gospels. Nevertheless it is just as important to discover and bear in mind individual characteristics when we study the Four Gospels as when we study any other books of history. Only in this way can we fully appreciate the record. We must learn where to put the emphasis in our reading, and how to read between the lines. As we note concerning photographs that this was a snapshot and this a careful pose, or that for this the negative was not retouched, while for this the wrin-

kles and blemishes were rubbed out; and after thus valuing our photographs decide about the actual appearance of the person they portray; in like manner we must note the character of the four pictures of Jesus before we can determine what manner of person he was.

The foregoing statements are not equivalent to saying that the gospels are untrustworthy, but only that, like all biographies, they are limited by the limitations of their authors or of those from whom the material was gained. None knew Jesus thoroughly, not even the disciple who leaned upon his breast; and no evangelist could write about him without personal bias and purposes that would shape his narrative.

Moreover, when we know and bear in mind the characteristics of a gospel, we not only read it with new intelligence, but often we find new grounds for trusting its statements. For example, in Luke—as we shall presently notice—there are plain indications that its author looked upon the twelve with much reverence, and disliked to state anything to their discredit; any record, therefore, of their shortcomings and failures in Luke (and there are many such) is specially impressive and credible, since we are sure Luke would have omitted it could he have found good excuse for so doing. Again, Matthew is so eager to point out fulfillment of prophecy in Jesus' life that sometimes he seems to strain the prophecy in order to make it foretell the



particular event; but the very far-fetchedness of his fulfilments shows how careful he was to treat his facts honestly. The temptation to change them, more or less, in order to make them meet the prophecy, was evidently great, yet he stoutly resisted it.

Let us look, then, at the four evangelists and their four pictures of Christ, considering specially those facts that reveal the characteristics of each gospel.

### *Matthew*

Very little is known of Matthew the apostle except the fact that he was a collector of customs at Capernaum, and the circumstances of his call to follow Jesus. In each list of the apostles he stands seventh or eighth, which gives a hint of the estimate put upon his ability by the evangelists. The uniform tradition is that he was the author of the First Gospel, and that he wrote it in Hebrew, by which probably is meant Aramaic. Some truth must lie behind this tradition; for if the apostolic authorship has been purely an invention to give authority to the gospel, a more important apostle would have been selected. But the author of this gospel has incorporated in it nearly the whole of Mark: and, as W. C. Allen observes, "It is indeed not impossible, but it is very improbable, that an apostle should rely upon the work of another for the entire framework of his narrative." Nor could the First Gospel have been written in Hebrew, because it reproduces the Greek phraseol-



ogy of Mark often almost exactly. The origin of the tradition is most simply explained by supposing that Matthew did write in Hebrew or Aramaic some book which was used by the author of the First Gospel as the basis of his work: and for this reason the whole compilation was called the Gospel According to Matthew. This has already been pointed out in discussing the synoptic problem.

Though the author of the First Gospel must remain unknown, the strongly Hebraic character of his book makes it evident that he was a Jew; while the broad view he takes of the mission of Christ—beginning his story with the visit of the Gentile magi to the young child and ending with the commission of the apostles to make disciples of all nations—both found only in this gospel—would indicate that he had a wider horizon than most Jews who lived in Palestine. He has, as Moffatt notes, given an unconscious portrayal of himself in the saying of Jesus, recorded in his gospel alone, “Every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old” (13 : 52). Where his home was, of course, we cannot know. A favorite guess is Southern Syria—say Phœnicia—in which were many Jewish Christians.

That Matthew (to use the established name for the book) was written primarily for Jews is unmistakable.

It contains more than forty quotations from the Old Testament: it traces the genealogy of Christ back to Abraham: it takes special pains to point out the fulfilment of prophecy: it is the only gospel to record Jesus' declaration that the law is permanent (5 : 17-19); and, indeed, its whole presentation of Jesus is as the Jewish Messiah. Most fittingly it is placed as the beginning of the New Testament, for it forms a natural transition from the messages of the Old Testament prophets. The Jewish readers, however, for whom Matthew was written, must have lived outside of Palestine; otherwise there would have been no need to follow Mark in translating Aramaic words (27 : 33, 46) and in stating a custom of the Passover (27 : 15), or a Sadducean belief (22 : 23).

It is generally held that the book was written not far from the year A. D. 70; and, if so, the character of the times explains the purpose of the author. In that mad revolt against Rome, which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem, the patriotism of the Jews became a frenzy; and many Jewish Christians turned back from Christ to the national religion, or wavered in their belief that he was really the promised Messiah. When Jerusalem fell, those who remained steadfast had to undergo another testing of their faith, because this sore calamity was so contrary to all their expectations of the Messianic kingdom. During these trying hours, when Jewish Christians, as they thought about Jesus,

were repeating the question which John the Baptist in an hour of trial once asked, "Art thou He that cometh or look we for another?" the Gospel of Matthew was written to reassure them by telling the life of Jesus in such a way as to answer that question once more. The book is a narrative; but, as Dr. Burton has shown ("Introduction to the Gospels" 12f.), it is a narrative with an argumentative purpose. What Matthew seeks to prove, so as to establish the faith of the perplexed and wavering Jewish Christian, may be summed up under four heads:

First, Jesus was the long expected Messiah. This is proved by pointing out how exactly and minutely the Old Testament Messianic prophecies were fulfilled in his birth, life, and death. Such proof would be to Jews most convincing, and was repeatedly used by the apostles when they preached to Jewish audiences, beginning with Peter's sermon at Pentecost. It seems, as we have already said, that, in his eagerness to find fulfilments of prophecy, Matthew sometimes gets far away from the literal sense of the Old Testament passages; *e. g.*, how can the statement that God called Israel out of Egypt (Hos. 11 : 1) be a prophecy that the infant Jesus should be brought back from that same land? Is the prediction that Ramah would mourn over its people carried away to Babylon (Jer. 31 : 15) in any sense fulfilled by the sorrow of Bethlehem over the babes murdered by Herod? And who can say cer-

tainly what prophecy is fulfilled in the fact that Jesus, because he dwelt in Nazareth, was called a Nazarene? But if these fulfilments seem far-fetched, then, evidently, the writer was not—as some critics have supposed—inventing incidents to fit the prophecies; rather he was hunting hard to find prophecies that would fit the incidents.

Second, the kingdom of Jesus was the true Messianic kingdom. This fact is set forth, among other ways, by four groups of Jesus' own sayings, *viz.*: (5-8) the Sermon on the Mount, which is like an inaugural proclamation stating who are the subjects, and what are the laws, the life, etc., of the kingdom; (10) the instructions to the apostles as to how they are to proclaim the kingdom; (18) the conduct of members of the kingdom to each other; (24-25) the final consummation of the kingdom. It is noteworthy that the transition from each of these groups to the narrative is by practically the same formula, "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished these words," which some think to be an indication by the evangelist that all the groups were taken from the same collection of sayings, *i. e.*, that they formed a part, or Wendt would say the whole, of the so-called Logia or Quelle.

Third, Jesus offered the kingdom to his own nation; but, despite his warnings, they refused it, and put him to death. In no other gospel is there such a clear picture of the attitude of the Jews toward Jesus, or such

a full answer to the objections with which they sought to justify their attitude. Nor have we elsewhere such utterances of warning and denunciation. The most emphatic condemnation of the Pharisees (23), and the clearest predictions of the doom of the nation (8 : 11-12, 21 : 43) are peculiar to Matthew.

Fourth, because the Jews rejected their Messiah they have lost their place in his kingdom; and it is now open to all nations. Many of the parables peculiar to Matthew emphasize the exclusion of unworthy Jews from the kingdom, *e. g.*, plants rooted up (15 : 13), tares burned (13 : 30), bad fish cast away (13 : 48), foolish virgins shut out (25 : 11), the guest without a wedding garment cast out (22 : 13). And this gospel alone gives the plain statement of Christ, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (21 : 43). Henceforth, the field is the world (13 : 38), and the laborers in it are to make disciples of all nations (28 : 19). "The author's aim is by no means attained when he has advanced evidence that Jesus is the Messiah. He reaches his goal only when, with this as the first step of his argument, he has shown that Jesus the Messiah founded a kingdom of universal scope, abolishing all Jewish limitations" (Burton).

When the gospels were being brought together in one manuscript, Matthew was generally supposed to have been written first, and so it was placed first in the col-



lection. This position, which it has held ever since, has increased its importance. Readers of the gospels usually begin with Matthew, and are more familiar with it than with the other gospels. Its abundance of material, its attractive style and its convenient arrangement for memorizing, secure its popularity. Jülicher pronounces it, "the principal gospel of Christendom, the gospel by which the picture of Jesus has been engraved on all our minds . . . the most important book ever written."

### *Mark*

If, as early tradition states and the majority of modern scholars agree, the author of this gospel was the John Mark of Acts, who is usually identified with the Mark of the Epistles, we know considerable about him. He was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4 : 10), and probably like him a Levite. Early writers call him "the maimed-fingered"; if this indicates a physical defect, he would not be allowed to serve in the temple. His home was in Jerusalem, and was evidently one of some wealth (Acts 12 : 12-13). He may have known Jesus, despite the statement of Papias that he had neither heard nor accompanied him; indeed, there is ground for supposing that the Last Supper was in his house, and that he himself, roused from sleep by the noise of soldiers outside, was the "certain young man" who followed the armed band to Gethsemane. The

incident is given only in Mark (14 : 51-2), and there seems no reason for its narration except personal interest.

While at times he worked with Barnabas and Paul (Acts 12 : 25; 15 : 39, Col. 4 : 10), he was most closely associated with Peter, who calls him "my son" (I Peter 5 : 13). His boyhood in Jerusalem had probably given him a knowledge of Greek and Latin, which were sealed tongues to the Galilean fishermen; so Papias may be right when he says that Mark acted as interpreter for Peter. In general he seems to have been a good assistant rather than a leader—not a prophet or teacher, but "useful for ministering" (II Timothy 4 : 11). All this agrees with the impression as to its author which we gain from the gospel itself, *viz.*: "that he was a born Jew, familiar with the circle of the original apostles, and especially interested in Peter, but also a much-travelled person, rejoicing in the fact that the gospel was to be preached to all nations" (Jülicher).

According to Papias, as we have seen, Mark's story of Jesus is largely that which Peter used to tell. This seems probable. There certainly are abundant marks of an eye-witness—graphic touches that are given simply because the scene remains in memory (*e. g.*, 4 : 38; 5 : 5; 6 : 39; 10 : 32, 50); and they are what Peter might have seen. Also, in the incidents where Peter, James, and John were the only apostles present (5 : 37 ff.; 14 : 33 ff.), as well as in the story of Peter's denial

(14 : 54, 66-72), there are details not found in the other gospels. At the same time some incidents are omitted which Peter from modesty or shame would not narrate, *e. g.*, the walking on the water, the promise about the rock and keys, the stater in the fish's mouth, and the question about forgiving a brother (all told in Matthew 14 : 24ff.; 17 : 4; 16 : 18f.; 18 : 21f.); also the miraculous draught of fishes and the sifting by Satan (both told in Luke 5 : 1f.; 22 : 31). The limits of the story, too, are those laid down by Peter when, at the choice of Matthias, he said an apostle must be a witness, "beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was received up from us" (Acts 1 : 20).

Doubtless Peter was not the only source of information. The book falls naturally into two main divisions *viz.*: the Galilean ministry (chaps. 1-9) and the final days in Jerusalem (chaps. 11-16), connected by a brief account of the Perean ministry (chap. 10). The second main division is much the fuller, and has more of Jesus' sayings. One part of it (chap. 13) seems to have been taken from a written source; and Mark's residence in Jerusalem would acquaint him with what Jesus said and did there.

The Gospel of Mark evidently was written for Gentiles rather than for Jews. There are no quotations from the Old Testament except in conversations and in the opening verses (1 : 2-3). Jewish customs, etc., are explained (7 : 2-4; 12 : 18; 13 : 3; 14 : 12;

15 : 42). And though he loves to quote the Aramaic words of Christ, he always translates them (3 : 17; 5 : 41; 7 : 11, 34; 14 : 36; 15 : 34). In Christ's statement that the temple should be a house of prayer Mark alone has the words "for all the nations," thus putting the Gentile side by side with the Jew (11 : 17).

Whether the Gentile world for which Mark wrote was, in particular, the Roman world, is not so evident; but there are indications that this was the fact, *e. g.*, Jewish money is given its Roman equivalent (12 : 42), Latin words are sometimes used (6 : 27; 15 : 39, 44), and the teaching about divorce recognizes the wife's putting away her husband, which was a Roman but not a Jewish practice (10 : 12). Most scholars accept as true the tradition that Peter spent his last days in Rome; then Mark may have written his gospel there, as various early writers declare. The fact that Rufus and Alexander were sons of Simon of Cyrene (15 : 21), which Mark learned through his residence in Jerusalem, may have been mentioned by him because he knew them personally, or possibly because Rufus was known to the Roman Christians (Rom. 16 : 13): the other synoptists saw no reason for repeating the statement. We have already noticed when discussing dates that this gospel seems to have been written before A. D. 70; but whether Peter was still living, as Clement of Alexandria says, or whether both he and Paul were dead, as Irenæus affirms, we cannot tell.

If we look at Mark as largely reproducing the story Peter was accustomed to tell those who asked him about Jesus—a story of which we have the outline in the report of what Peter said to Cornelius, Acts 10 : 37–42—and as also representing the oral gospel which those who were scattered abroad after the death of Stephen told when they went about preaching the Word (Acts 8 : 4), we shall see the explanation of its characteristics. “The story is told as it would be in conversation: dialogue plays a large part in it, and the utterances of speakers are introduced in the plainest way and generally by ‘he saith’ and ‘they say’ with no further distinction of the interlocutors” (Robinson, “Study of the Gospels,” 40). It is a plain story, such as an unlettered man would tell, with a use of colloquial terms and a lack of literary finish, which led even the writers of Matthew and Luke to make some changes when they incorporated the gospel in their own books. “There is something fresh and strong and primitive about the whole presentation, particularly in its very awkwardnesses.”

It is an unbiased story, setting forth the facts concretely without theological speculations or sentimental touches—a story possible only in those earliest days when the apostles felt that their great work was simply to be faithful witnesses to what they had seen and heard. While the divinity of Christ is clearly set forth, his humanity is made equally evident: indeed,



some of Mark's statements are omitted or toned down in the other gospels, apparently for fear that such plain revelations of human limitations might be stumbling blocks in the way of accepting the divinity of Jesus. For example, that he was a carpenter himself as well as a carpenter's son (6 : 3), that at one stage of his ministry his friends thought him insane (3 : 21), that in opening the eyes of a blind man he had to proceed by stages (8 : 22-26), and that in curing the deaf and tongue-tied man he put forth prolonged effort (7 : 32-37): these facts are omitted by Matthew and Luke; and while Mark says that at Nazareth "He could do no mighty work save that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them" (6 : 5), Matthew shades down this statement of his inability into "He did not many mighty works there" (13 : 58).

It is an evangelist's story, arranged to bring out gradually the disclosure of Christ's divine claims, emphasizing his miracles as proofs of divinity, and giving large space to the final scenes in Jerusalem—just such a story as would hold the attention and touch the heart of an audience not yet won to faith, and make them confess, as did the centurion beside the cross, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (15 : 39). While frequent mention is made of the fact that Jesus taught, very few of his teachings are given: what he was, as proved by what he did and suffered, is the great lesson of the book.

In reading this story we come nearest to seeing Jesus as the men of his day saw him. We have, not a portrait carefully painted to show the inner nature, as in the Fourth Gospel, nor even a photograph with certain lines softened or erased, as in the other two synoptics: we have in Mark a photograph printed from a negative as yet untouched. Whether such a picture is really more true and satisfying may, perhaps, be questioned; but its strict literalness makes it most valuable. And whereas Mark formerly was the least prized of all the gospels, because it contained so little not found in the others, to-day it receives special attention as not only the most primitive but also the most fresh and vivid and objective of them all.

### *Luke*

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts are by the same author. This is undisputed, and is evidenced not only by the opening verse of Acts, but also and more strongly by vocabulary, style, and arrangement, which are the same in both books. Luke, the companion of Paul, was probably the author. Such was the early and uniform tradition, and since Luke was by no means a prominent character in the apostolic age, there seems to be no reason why the tradition should have arisen unless it was based on fact. Moreover, certain passages in Acts, written in the first person plural, are unquestionably by an eye-witness; and the

argument is strong that this eye-witness was Luke, and that these passages are by the same person who wrote the rest of the book. We know that Luke was a Gentile physician (Col. 4 : 14), and we note his trained use of medical terms, and the fact that he alone records Jesus' use of saying, "Physician, heal thyself" (4 : 23). His gospel shows literary finish, and an historical sense much beyond the other gospels, as might be expected from a man of broader education.

His sources of information are various. He knows about written records (1 : 1-4), and—as we have seen—made use of Mark's gospel (whose author he knew personally, Phile. 24) and of the Logia. Probably his source for the story of the infancy was a written one—the style indicates this—and he may have used other similar sources. Then he may have learned much from Paul; for there are plain indications that Paul, though he never met Jesus during his ministry, was well acquainted with the facts of that ministry (*e. g.*, Acts 20 : 35; I Cor. 15 : 1-8; 9 : 14). Also, in his travels with Paul he must have met many early disciples (*e. g.*, Philip the evangelist at Cæsarea, Acts 21 : 8) who could give him first-hand information about Jesus. We notice that he seems to have had special information about the court of Herod (3 : 1, 19; 8 : 3; 9 : 7-9; 13 : 31; 23 : 7-12) gained, perhaps, from Manaen (Acts 13 : 1) or from Joanna (8 : 3).

In all, more than one-half of his gospel is not found in the other synoptics.

His two books are dedicated to Theophilus, whom some suppose to be any "Lover of God," but who was probably a real person—a Roman of rank (so the title "most excellent" would indicate: *cf.* Acts 24 : 3; 26 : 25; 23 : 26). Of course, he intended them for others besides Theophilus, and many things indicate that the readers he had in mind were Gentiles and especially Romans. He substitutes Gentile terms for Jewish—*e. g.*, master or teacher for rabbi, the skull for Golgotha (23 : 33), zealot for Cananæan (6 : 16); he tells of "the feast of unleavened bread which is called the Passover" (22 : 1); he explains that Capernaum is a city of Galilee (4 : 31) and that Arimathea is a city of the Jews (23 : 51); he calls the little sheet of water in Galilee a lake and not a sea; he even states that the Mount of Olives is nigh unto Jerusalem (Acts 1 : 12). On the other hand, he takes for granted that his readers know just where the Market of Appius and the Three Taverns are, and so will understand how far out from Rome the brethren came to meet Paul (Acts 28 : 15).

Luke plainly states the purpose of his writing: it is that Theophilus may know that the Christian faith, which he has embraced, is founded on facts that cannot be shaken (1 : 4). These facts are not alone those set forth in his gospel: the Book of Acts is a continua-

tion of them: and there is reason to think that Luke intended to write still another book—alas! that it was left unwritten—carrying on further the story of the work of Christ as it was wrought through his apostles. Other writers already have recorded some of these facts; but it seems to Luke that, having special opportunities for investigation and giving special care to his task, he can improve upon their work (1 : 3). He writes, therefore, as an historian, and Dr. Ramsay, who is specially qualified to pronounce upon Luke's other book, Acts, declares that for trustworthiness, skill in arranging his material, and sympathetic historical insight, he should be reckoned "among the historians of the first rank." He writes, also, as a literary artist—showing this not only in his command of Greek and his versatile style, but still more in his artistic treatment of each subject, his "rare combination of descriptive power with simplicity and dignity," and his "insight into the lights and shadows of character, and the conflict between spiritual forces" (Plummer).

Prompted by his historical instinct, Luke tries to arrange his material in chronological order. He takes from the Logia practically the same extracts as those in Matthew; but instead of giving them in a few large collections, he breaks them up and puts them, so far as possible, in their original setting. In his use of Mark he follows Mark's order very closely in the first part; even as Matthew does in the last part. But



Luke has a long passage (9 : 51-18 : 14) inserted into Mark's narrative and consisting largely of matter peculiar to himself. The indications of time for the events in this passage are few and vague, and the incidents seem to be gathered from various periods of Jesus' ministry. Where to place them is a difficult problem, and gives rise to the chief disagreements between various harmonies of the gospels or chronologies of the life of Christ. Possibly Luke himself did not know just where to put them, and threw them together as disconnected stories he had gathered from various sources; indeed, some critics would call this portion of his gospel "Luke's scrap-basket." Possibly, however, the section—which has its peculiarities—was taken by Luke from some written source, not used by Mark or Matthew.

Luke, with the great Gentile world in mind, sets forth a universal gospel. Jesus, whose genealogy is traced back to Adam instead of stopping with Abraham, is the Saviour for all men—for Samaritans, Gentiles, publicans, sinners, outcasts, as well as for Jews. Most of the parables peculiar to Luke's gospel are evangelistic; *e. g.*, the great supper, the good Samaritan, the Pharisee and the publican, the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son. There is special interest in women and in the life of the home. There are numerous teachings about riches—not in condemnation but in warning; possibly this was because Theophilus was

wealthy, or possibly Paul, when taking up his great collection for the poor at Jerusalem, emphasized Jesus' teachings about riches and poverty, and this impressed Luke who was with Paul part of the time. There is much emphasis of prayer, both by direct teachings and by references to Christ's example. The catholic spirit of this gospel, harmonizing as it does with the teachings of Paul, is a better reason than the mere fact that Luke at times travelled with Paul, for calling it "the Gospel of Paul."

Luke, more than Matthew, in following Mark's account of Jesus, omits details that might seem inconsistent with sinlessness and full divinity; *e. g.*, the violent acts in cleansing the temple; such emotions as anger, grief, groaning, vehemence; the strange sorrow and homesickness of Gethsemane, and the cry on the cross, "My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" He also shows deep respect for the apostles (a title he uses frequently while Matthew and Mark use it rarely), and dislikes to record anything to their discredit; *e. g.*, he omits the rebuke to Peter (Mark 8 : 33), the censure of the twelve (Mark 8 : 17*f.*), the ambitious request of James and John (Mark 10 : 35*f.*), and the flight at Jesus' arrest (Mark 14 : 50); he tones down the denial by Peter (22 : 54-62), and the rebuke to the twelve on the lake (8 : 25); he excuses the sleep at Gethsemane as "for sorrow" (22 : 45), and Peter's proposal to build three tabernacles on the

mount as "not knowing what he said" (9 : 33). In all this the spirit of a Christian of the second generation is shown. His picture of Jesus needs Mark's picture as its complement.

### *John*

The Fourth Gospel has been so fully considered in the discussion of the Johannine problem that little need be added here.

There is reason to believe that the present arrangement of the contents of this gospel is not in all places the original one. Certainly it is not in all places the probable one. For example, if chapter 5 is placed after chapter 6, then the notes of locality become harmonious: Jesus in Galilee (4 : 54) goes across the lake (6 : 1) and, after feeding the five thousand, goes up to the feast in Jerusalem (5 : 1) where his life is in danger (5 : 16) which causes him to return to Galilee again (7 : 1). Such a rearrangement, also, puts all the visits to Jerusalem, except that of 2 : 13, in the last year of his life, after the close of his popular ministry in Judea. This, too, seems probable. While the work in Galilee still promised success, there was no reason for his stirring up the hostility of the rulers by appearing in Jerusalem; but when the Galilean work had failed, and the shadow of the cross grew more evident, Jesus seems deliberately to have sought every opportunity to place his claims clearly before the San-

hedrin, that they might act upon them with full knowledge. The unnamed feast of 5 : 1, if the two chapters are transposed, would naturally be Pentecost.

Another passage that seems out of place is 7 : 15-24. If it is placed directly after chapter 5, it forms a fit conclusion to it. The reference to the miracle of Bethesda as if it had just been performed (7 : 23); the astonishment at his rabbinical teaching as if this was his first display of it (7 : 15); the ignorance of the multitude that his life was threatened (7 : 20), though at the Feast of the Tabernacles this was well-known (7 : 25); and the references to Moses and the law (*cf.* 5 : 45-47)—all suit the earlier feast far better than tabernacles. A simple transposition of this passage and 7 : 1-14 removes many difficulties.

Still again, chapter 14 with its closing words, "Arise, let us go hence," seems properly to conclude the address after the Last Supper. It will have that position if we put chapters 15-16 immediately after the prefatory statement of 13 : 31; and we shall no longer have the contradiction between 16 : 5 and 13 : 36. The change will also make the opening words of chapter 15 follow directly after Judas' departure to which they seem to refer; *e. g.*, 15 : 6.

Further rearrangements have been suggested, some of which are worth considering. The main difficulty, however, with all such changes in the order of the text, is to explain how the disarrangements could have arisen. It has been suggested that the leaves of the

original papyrus roll became unglued and were fastened together again, but not always in their original order; and in proof of this it is pointed out that, if we take a page containing a certain number of words as the unit, these dislocated passages all prove to be multiples of that unit. It is not easy to accept this explanation, but nothing better has been offered.

The theme of the Fourth Gospel is the self-revelation of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (20 : 31). Its main divisions are:

Prologue and Preliminary Testimony, 1 : 1-2 : 12.  
The Self-revelation to the World, 2 : 13-12 : 50.

By the Ministries of Jesus.

In Judea, 2 : 13-3 : 36.

In Samaria, 4 : 1-42.

In Galilee, 4 : 43-54; 6 : 1-71.

By the Conflicts at the Feasts.

At Pentecost, 5 : 1-47; 7 : 15-24.

At Tabernacles, 7 : 1-14, 25-52.

At Dedication, 9 : 1-10 : 39.

By the Last Public Labors.

In Perea and Bethany, 10 : 40-12 : 11.

In Jerusalem, 12 : 12-50.

The Self-revelation to the Disciples, 13 : 1-20 : 31.

By the Last Supper, 13 : 1-17 : 26.

By the Last Sufferings, 18 : 1-19 : 42.

By the Resurrection, 20 : 1-31.

Appendix, 21 : 1-23.



If the style is the man, that of John merits special attention. Gloag says of it, "There is a remarkable simplicity in the style of John. His vocabulary is small; the same words—love, life, light, the world—continually occur and are interwoven together. The sentences are simple in construction, being in the terse aphoristic Hebrew manner, and not in the involved structure conformable to the genius of the Greek language, and illustrated in the Epistles of Paul. Connecting particles are also very sparingly employed. Hence, of all the writings of the New Testament, none are so easily read and translated as those of John. There is also a peculiar kind of repetition. The same thoughts, or, at least, thoughts with little variation of meaning, are repeated for the sake of emphasis. Often the same idea is expressed both positively and negatively. . . . With the simplicity in style and diction, and even in the thoughts and sentiments of the Johanne writings, there is combined a real profundity which no human intellect can fathom. The Fourth Gospel especially is remarkable for its depth; it has been well called by the fathers 'the spiritual gospel,' as compared with the synoptical gospels. It opens the deepest recesses of the spiritual life; it discloses the very heart of the incarnate God; it reveals the divine human nature which Christ possessed; it lifts up the veil, and lets us see into the holy of holies. The two preponderating ideas are life and light; and these

are embodied in Christ: he is at once the life and the light of man, the source of all spiritual life, and the essence of all spiritual truth, the sun of the moral universe. The writings of John may be compared to a well of water, so clear and sparkling that at first one thinks he sees to the bottom; but that well is so deep, that the more one gazes into it, the deeper does it appear, and no one has yet been able to fathom it.

“The interpretation of the Johannine writings is peculiarly difficult by reason of their profundity. Hence, one essential element of interpretation is sympathy with John’s spirit. It is only a Johannine Christian who can truly understand and interpret John’s writings. It requires such a spiritual insight, as is rarely possessed, fully to fathom the deep things contained in them. Hence, a religious and spiritual nature is essential; we must have largely imbibed the spirit of Jesus Christ before we can enter into the spirit of John’s writings. This well is deep; and, if destitute of a spiritual mind, we have nothing wherewith to draw. As Origen strikingly puts it: ‘The gospels are the first-fruits of all the Scriptures, and the first-fruits of the gospels is that of John, into whose meaning no man can enter unless he too has reclined upon the bosom of Jesus.’”

## CHAPTER XI

### THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE GOSPELS

ALL the topics we have considered bear directly or indirectly upon the great question whether the gospels are trustworthy; and the main arguments for or against an affirmative answer are drawn from them. But some additional arguments deserve a place in a special chapter.

The story of Jesus, as given in the gospels, must be treated as either fact or fiction. Few if any scholars would pronounce it wholly fictitious. They would agree that probably there was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, an earnest, high-minded Galilean peasant, who gathered a little band of disciples to whom he taught some simple but noble truths about God and man, and who finally was put to death by the Roman authorities. But they would no more treat the gospel story as sober history of this peasant than they would treat Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" as sober history of the British King Arthur. In their opinion it is mostly fiction. If they are right the problem at once arises, Who invented it? For we cannot fairly refuse to accept the story as fact unless we can find some satisfactory explanation of how it originated, if a fiction.

The deists of the eighteenth century declared that the apostles deliberately lied about Jesus. But no one to-day accepts that explanation; it is too evidently absurd. The apostles by such fraud could gain only hardship, suffering, loss, and death; a man does not spend his life in proclaiming what he knows to be a lie for these rewards. The story they told was in many ways not to their own credit, for it recorded their stupidity, selfishness, cowardice; if they were adepts at invention, they certainly would have made their conduct appear more praiseworthy. Moreover, the religion which they preached with all earnestness had in it nothing but denunciation for deception, and eternal doom for liars; how could they proclaim it when conscience told them that they themselves were under its condemnation? An apostolic band of fiction-makers and mongers is inconceivable.

The theory usually advanced to-day is that the gospel story was a product of the reverent and practically unconscious invention of the early church. To the simple story of Jesus, as originally told by the apostles, constant additions were made by ignorant, enthusiastic, imaginative Christians of the first century. Because they accepted him as Messiah, they believed he must in all respects have fulfilled the Messianic prophecies, and performed the mighty works expected of a Messiah. Because he was the hero of their faith, they gave to him the legendary greatness which increasingly

gathers about a hero. Around his head they placed a halo of miracles; in his lips they put discourses of supernatural self-assertion and wisdom. It was not done deliberately and with intent to deceive; they honestly believed all that they delighted to proclaim—it was the self-deception of love.

Against this theory we may bring the objection that so long as the apostles and other companions of Jesus were alive, they would be witnesses to the real facts, and hindrances to the growth of fiction. Indeed, Strauss and the other framers of the theory started with the supposition that the gospels were written well on in the second century, and set forth the thought of the church about Jesus a hundred years after his death. But, as we have seen, it is agreed to-day that certainly three of our gospels were written in the first century—and at least one of them as early as the middle of the first century—before the original witnesses had passed away, and when there had been little time for the development of myths and legends. Nevertheless, we must remember that among an ignorant, enthusiastic body of followers, myths and legends do develop quickly and persist most stubbornly. The lives of saints and founders of sects—heathen or Christian, ancient, mediæval or modern—are usually embellished with details that will not endure historical criticism. And the mere fact that these lives were written by immediate disciples does not guarantee their accuracy.



Accordingly, in considering the trustworthiness of the gospels, it is not enough to show that we have them in their original form, that their date is in the first century, and that their sources are the recollections of the apostles. We must also consider the qualifications of the apostles as witnesses, and the character of the story they tell.

The fact that the gospel narrative is full of the miraculous does not justify an immediate rejection of it as evidently false, or a contemptuous judgment of the apostles as superstitious, credulous witnesses. This is the treatment often given by men who deny miracles; but it is most unfair. The question of miracles is a comprehensive one, starting with the philosophical problem of the existence of a personal God and his relations to the universe, passing next to the religious problem of the attitude of God toward man and the function of miracles in his self-revelation, and ending with the historical problem of the sufficiency of evidence that certain miracles were actually performed. If the student of the gospels is fully convinced that there is no personal God, or that the universe is independent of his will, or that he does not wish man to know him, or that sufficient knowledge of God is given in natural ways, then the miraculous is ruled out, and any report of it is absurd. In other words, the atheist or the deist is justified in affirming that miracles do not happen. But the agnostic, and still less the

theist, has little right to make that affirmation until he has carefully examined the historical evidence that miracles have taken place. And no evidence is so important and worthy of serious consideration as that presented in the gospels; for no miracles are in such evident harmony with the noblest conceptions of God and man as the miracles of Christ.

The gospel story comes to us either directly or almost at first-hand from the apostles. This holds true whatever may be the solution of the synoptic and Johanne problems. The apostles were not the only persons who accompanied Jesus during at least a part of his ministry (Acts 1 : 21-26); but they were the men who spoke with authority concerning it, and who considered witness-bearing to be one of their special duties. Were they trustworthy witnesses? They certainly had abundant opportunity to learn the facts which they proclaimed; no one disputes this. And, as we have already noted, their character and lack of inducement to deceive makes us believe that they would report the facts exactly as they had learned them. But were they competent witnesses; or did their ignorance and prejudices and enthusiasm make them, as some critics affirm, wholly incompetent?

Before answering this, notice just what we ask of the apostles. We do not demand that they deal with the miracles as a twentieth-century scientist would, and give us their verdict concerning the supernatural.

Nor do we demand that they interpret Christ's teaching as a twentieth-century theologian would, and give us their opinion of its meaning. All we ask of them is a correct statement of just what Jesus did do and say; then we ourselves can supply the scientific explanation or the theological interpretation. Did they see five thousand men fed with a few loaves and fishes? Did they hear Jesus say, "I am the light of the world"? Or were they so incompetent to see and hear that we cannot accept their testimony, though they honestly try to tell the truth? Would men like the apostles be believed in their statement of facts if on the witness stand to-day?

The answer to this is well put by Dr. Gore: "The apostles will take very high rank among the world's witnesses. As represented in the gospels they were men not of the poorest but of the more independent trading class; simple, literal-minded men; not superstitious and still less romantic; free from all traces of morbidness; slow of belief through lack of imagination; as individuals strikingly different in character, so as not easily to be led in the same way; with the exception of St. John not well adapted to be theologians, and none of them (like St. Paul) controversial theologians; but singularly well qualified as witnesses. They were qualified as witnesses because, free from all preoccupation with ideas and systems, they were plain men who could receive the impress of facts; who

could tell a simple, plain tale, and show by their lives how much they believed it. And they were trained to be witnesses. Jesus Christ intended his gospel to rest on facts; and, in correspondence with this intention, the whole stress in the apostolic church was laid on witness. The first thing the church had to do, before it developed its theology, was to tell its tale of fact. 'We are witnesses of these things'" ("The Incarnation," 81f.).

The presence of errors and discrepancies in the gospels would not overthrow our belief that the apostles were trustworthy witnesses if we saw that these arose from (a) limitations in knowledge common to their land and century, *e. g.*, the belief that certain diseases were caused by demons—provided, of course, that demoniacal possession is proved an error; or (b) misunderstandings on the part of the apostles or their reporters of statements evidently open to misunderstanding, *e. g.*, Christ's teaching about his second coming; or (c) the natural variations of different persons telling the same story, *e. g.*, the opening of the eyes of the blind at Jericho. Nor are the gospels discredited by the fact that each writer has his own way of treating the subject. This is true of all historians; the personal equation must be taken into account in estimating the value of their testimony. In the case of the evangelists, however, we are surprised to find how little change that equation makes. Their reverence for the



truth kept them from yielding to personal preferences and prejudices in reporting the facts.

The frequent allusions in other New Testament books to facts about Christ furnishes another test of the trustworthiness of the evangelists and their sources. We have already noticed (p. 13) that from such undisputed works as Paul's four great epistles we can gather enough to make a valuable outline of the life of Jesus, and that this outline agrees completely with the record given in the gospels. Now, unless the story thus outlined in Paul's letters is true, we must suppose that, less than thirty years after the death of Jesus, the real facts had been so completely lost that a scholar most eager and competent to recover them could not do so; and also that a fictitious story had been so cunningly framed as to deceive the keenest mind of the apostolic age. But if we accept the testimony of Paul as trustworthy, we have new and independent confirmation of the trustworthiness of the witnesses whose testimony is recorded in the Four Gospels.

A much stronger objection to the theory that the story of Jesus is fiction reverently framed by the early church, lies in the character it portrays. The gospels are four sketches of the life of Jesus, made at different times and for different purposes. The first three have most material in common, yet each has its independent contribution; the fourth is almost entirely independent and supplementary. They may be compared to



four pictures painted by different artists from different stand-points. Notice first, that all are pictures of the same person. Some critics dispute this, declaring that the Jesus of the synoptics is not the same as the Jesus of John; but the Christian Church throughout the centuries has never perceived any difference save that John portrays more clearly the inner, divine nature of the Lord. The pictures are composed of a multitude of details, each adding its touch to the portrait; yet all are in perfect harmony, so that at no point in the story can we pronounce an act or saying of Jesus to be out of keeping with his character. Captious critics have tried to do this, but have not succeeded.

The character of Jesus, as thus portrayed in the gospels, is certainly most remarkable. It is symmetrical, sinless, unique: it is the noblest ever placed before human contemplation: it is a perfect blending of the human and the divine. The evangelists do not try to impress this upon us by laudatory epithets: they do not even state it in abstract form: they simply give us a plain narrative of deeds and words, and leave us to form our own opinion of Jesus. What opinion has been formed, even by men who reject the miracles, is well stated by Lecky in words often quoted: "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting

on all nations, ages, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may truly be said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists. This has indeed been the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life" ("History of European Morals," 2 : 8).

If the story of Jesus is fiction, it is the most wonderful fiction in all literature. "The inventor of it," as Rousseau declared, "would be more astonishing than the hero." Shakespeare is not worthy of comparison with the unknown man who had the genius to imagine such a character as that of Jesus and such a life as he lived. "It takes a Newton to forge a Newton. What man could have fabricated a Jesus? None but a Jesus," said Theodore Parker. But according to the theory of sceptics the transformation of the historical figure of a simple Galilean reformer into the wonderful God-man, the Lord and Saviour of the world, was accomplished not by the genius of any one man, but by the collective thought of the early church dwelling reverently upon its Master. If we accept this theory we must believe:

(1) That a body of ignorant, self-deluded men and women of the first century, some of them reared in the

narrowness of Judaism and others in the low morality of heathendom, invented an ideal character free from all local, racial, and temporal limitations, harmoniously combining compassion with justice, humility with conscious greatness, the human with the divine—a character which the world has ever since pronounced unique and unsurpassable;

(2) That they imagined a series of deeds by which such a character found remarkable and always appropriate expression, including among them miracles so full of grace and meaning that even a sceptic confesses “the halo of the miracles is worthy of the figure” (Goldwin Smith);

(3) That they put into the mouth of this fictitious character the purest and sublimest teachings, free from the fanaticism that fired their own souls, and in strong contrast to the religious ideas they had been taught in childhood—teachings whose rich contents the world has by no means yet exhausted; and

(4) That they did all this by no deliberate co-operation or conscious effort, but simply by allowing their imaginations to have free play, and offering the various results as contributions to the gospel story.

Such a theory, when we realize what it involves, is evidently incredible. We could more easily believe that the house-painters in some obscure town transformed a tavern sign into a rival of the Sistine Madonna by adding touches of paint from time to time as they

passed on their way to work. It would never have been seriously advocated had not those writers who pronounce the gospel story a fiction felt, with good reason, that they must in some way explain the origin of the fiction, and that the theory of deliberate invention by the apostles or evangelists was even more incredible.

If we want to know what the imagination of the early church would probably have produced, we may look at such a book as the Gospel of Thomas which is a fiction of the second century. It is an attempt to fill in by imagination the period of Jesus' history between his infancy and his visit to the temple at the age of twelve—a period that naturally arouses curiosity, but is passed over in the gospels with a single verse. It seems to have been popular in its day, and to have aroused no objections, but to us it is a monstrous production. The child Jesus works miracles, of which some are absurd, as carrying water in his cloak, while others are vindictive, as striking blind those who accuse him. He is disrespectful to his teachers, angry with his parents and companions, ready to injure or kill by a curse any who offend him. The whole village is in constant fear of him, and with good reason they say to Joseph: "Since thou hast such a child, either leave the village or teach him to bless and not to curse; for he is killing our children." There are other apocryphal gospels of the same century or later; but they all are on the same low level. Worthless in other re-



spects, these gospels are valuable as a revelation of the historical imagination possessed by the early church; and they render still more improbable the theory that the story recorded by the evangelists was the product of that imagination. Though John Stuart Mill rejects all miracles and pronounces much of the Fourth Gospel to be "poor stuff," he sums up the situation correctly when he says, "It is of no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of his followers.

. . . Who among his disciples or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the gospels?" ("Three Essays on Religion," 253). Or, as van Dyke puts it, "He is such a person as men could not have imagined if they would, and would not have imagined if they could" ("Gospel for an Age of Doubt," 59).

If it is impossible to account for the gospel story as fiction, we must take it as history, and treat it accordingly. This does not mean that we must accept all its details without question, refusing to admit the possibility of error; even the most extreme believer in the inspiration of the Bible would not take such a position. If the gospels are historical documents, they must be submitted to historical criticism; the demand is just,



and in the present day it cannot be denied. In fact, in proportion as we are persuaded that they are trustworthy, we are glad to have them submitted to the most searching tests—provided the tests are fair and honestly applied. All that we ask is that the story of Jesus be not contemptuously waived aside as preposterous fiction, but be treated with respect and serious consideration. And if thus treated, we can wait with confidence the verdict of the honest seeker after truth.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE USE OF THE GOSPELS FOR A LIFE OF CHRIST

PRACTICALLY all that we know concerning the life of Jesus is what is recorded in the four canonical gospels. There is bare mention of him in heathen writers and possibly in Josephus: some incidents or sayings of doubtful genuineness are found in the Apostolic Fathers and the Apocryphal Gospels: a very few but precious items may be gleaned from the Book of Acts and the New Testament Epistles; but nowhere is there anything that really adds to the story of the four evangelists or takes away from it. Some of the Lives of Christ fill bulky volumes, but they reach their great size either by describing minutely the environment in which Jesus lived and worked, or by discussing at wearisome length the statements in the gospels. They may make the gospel narrative more intelligible: they cannot bring any further facts to supplement it. And not infrequently they are open to the criticism that we almost lose sight of the central figure in the mass of irrelevant details they heap about him.

The great question, then, concerning any Life of Jesus is, What is the author's attitude toward the gos-

pels? How far does he consider them to be trustworthy history? And upon examination it will be found that he has adopted one of three possible opinions:

(1) All four gospels are trustworthy. They give the testimony of honest men and competent witnesses. There may be minor errors or discrepancies, such as are found in the best of testimony, but as a whole their record is true and harmonious.

(2) The synoptics are trustworthy, but John is not. Its picture of Jesus and its record of his words must be taken with qualifications or rejected entirely as being late in origin and deeply influenced by theological ideas of the second century. In John we see Jesus, not as he really was, but as a later age thought he must have been; and, therefore, the actual life of Jesus must be constructed from the synoptics alone or with very cautious use of John.

(3) No one of the gospels is trustworthy. Either they were written too late for actual knowledge of the facts, or they are full of natural misconceptions and errors. All we can do is to take their statements as the basis of our work, and alter and reconstruct according to our best judgment. We may end by accepting the larger part of their narrative, or by going as far in scepticism as Schmiedel, who views with suspicion all except nine brief passages emphasizing the human weakness and ignorance of Jesus, and pronounces these

nine "the foundation pillars for a really scientific life of Jesus" (see his article on the gospels in *Encyc. Biblica*); but in any case our attitude toward the gospels is one of hostile criticism.

Logically a fourth position is possible, *viz.*, that John is trustworthy, while the synoptics are not. But though certain critics give John the foremost place for accuracy, and would follow it rather than the synoptics in settling a vexed question, *e. g.*, the time of the Last Supper, I know of none who accepts John but rejects the synoptics. The reason is evident—the problems presented in the synoptics are of the same character as those in John, but by no means as difficult; and the student who finds a solution for the latter is not troubled by the former.

A writer's attitude toward the gospels will affect his work at every point. For example, if he adopts the second of the three positions, it will influence his conclusion not only as to such a vitally important matter as the divinity of Christ, which is most clearly proclaimed in the Fourth Gospel, but also as to the comparatively unimportant question of the length of Christ's public ministry. For, while John distinctly mentions three Passovers, so that the ministry could not have been less than two years, the synoptics mention only the Passover of the crucifixion; and the writer who follows them alone is apt to put the whole ministry into the space of one year. It is necessary,

therefore, before accepting a writer's conclusions, even upon matters of chronology, to ascertain his position concerning the gospels. Usually he begins his work by definitely stating and defending it; and fairness to the reader would demand that he should always do so.

Evidently a critic's philosophical and practical attitude toward the supernatural will largely shape his opinion of the trustworthiness of the gospels. As Dr. Bruce says, "It is the miraculous element in the gospels that chiefly raises the question as to their historical trustworthiness. Eliminate that element, and hardly a doubt would remain; the residuary words and deeds of Jesus would be welcomed as a proof that in Judea there once lived a sage and philanthropist of unparalleled wisdom and goodness." In regard to the miracles of Christ, we may divide writers into a left and a right group, and also make a subdivision of each group, as follows:

*Left.*—Those who deny all miracles, and who therefore reject the gospel record of them as untrustworthy, the product of a credulous, unscientific age. They may explain the recorded miracles as myths and legends that sprang up after the death of Jesus and gained ready credence among the early Christians, or else as events for which a natural explanation may be found, and parables and sayings of Jesus that were misunderstood and distorted into miracles. But,



whatever the explanation, they insist that because miracles do not happen, the account must be untrue.

*Left Centre.*—Those who deny all miracles, but believe that Jesus possessed some power or knowledge by which he could perform deeds beyond the ability of other men. Possibly the psychic power which he exerted is latent in all of us, or the knowledge he possessed may some day be the common property of mankind, but up to the present time his wonderful deeds are unparalleled. Nevertheless, they were not supernatural; and whatever is related concerning them, that is evidently supernatural, must be rejected as unhistorical.

*Right Centre.*—Those who admit that Jesus performed real miracles—acts beyond not only present human power but all human power. Nevertheless, either from an unconscious aversion to the miraculous or from a desire to propitiate sceptics, these writers seek to diminish the number of his miracles as much as possible, by explaining away some of them as natural events or misreported parables, and questioning the reliability of the report concerning others.

*Right.*—Those persons who recognize without reserve the power of Christ to work miracles. They may not accept all the miracles in the gospel record, but they do not question them simply because they are miracles. For example, certain writers of this group decline to believe that saints came forth from the grave

and went into Jerusalem after Christ's resurrection; but they do this, not because the story involves a miracle, but because it is found only in Matthew, and is of a very different character from the other miracles, and seems like a later invention arising from a misunderstanding of such teachings as I Cor. 15 : 20 and John 5 : 25. The supernatural in the gospel story is not a stumbling block to these writers, for it harmonizes with their conception of God and his attitude toward man.

It is impossible to deny miracles and yet accept the gospels as the report of honest eye-witnesses. Paulus stands as a proof of this. In 1828 he wrote a book striving to show that the gospel story is from the apostles and is true, though none of the events in it were really supernatural. For every apparent miracle he found a natural explanation, "though the explanation is often more remarkable than the miracle." In some instances he thinks we read a miracle into the story, when the apostles themselves did not intend to relate one; *e. g.*, the fish which Peter caught to pay the temple tax did not have a stater in its mouth, but was sold by him for that sum. In other instances he thinks the apostles honestly mistook a natural event for a miracle; *e. g.*, when they thought Christ was walking on the water, he was in fact walking along the shore so close to the lake that it looked as if he were on the water; the paralytic borne by four supposed himself to be

helpless, but really had strength enough to walk when roused to the effort; the resurrection of Jesus was caused by the effect of the myrrh and spices in restoring his vital forces, which had not been destroyed by the crucifixion. A book filled with such remarkable explanations is decidedly entertaining: as Fairbairn remarks, "One of the driest of books, it has yet come to be one of the most amusing." No later writer has fully repeated the attempt of Paulus, but some of his explanations are still brought forward by rationalists; *e. g.*, that the daughter of Jairus was not really dead but only seemed so (Holtzmann); and that Jesus did not expect to feed the five thousand with his little supply of food, but was ready to share it as far as it might go, and this display of generosity shamed others into bringing forward their own hidden supplies which amply sufficed for all (Keim). Such attempts to keep the gospel story, and yet reject the supernatural, are ingenious but unsatisfactory: it is much simpler and more logical to throw out the miraculous events entirely.

The discarding of the miracles, however, not only makes great gaps in the gospel narrative, but also renders that which remains almost valueless for a Life of Jesus. And this for two reasons: (1) The career of Jesus becomes unintelligible without certain miracles which shaped its course; *e. g.*, what caused the crisis that practically ended his work in Galilee, if there

was no miraculous feeding of the five thousand? No multitude would ever be roused to a wild enthusiasm and an attempt to crown him king, if Jesus simply shamed them into sharing their food with one another. What happened at Bethany to alarm the Sadducees and make them join with the Pharisees in the decision that Jesus must be put to death? Even Renan feels that something like a miracle must have taken place—"some motive proceeding from Bethany helped to hasten the death of Jesus": it was, he thinks, either some saying of Jesus to the sisters which was distorted into a report of a resurrection of Lazarus, or else there was a fraudulent miracle. What happened at Jericho to arouse the popular Messianic enthusiasm that led up to the triumphal entry? Even Keim is disposed to believe that in some way—perhaps through the intense power of faith working on the physical system—the blind actually was made to see; "at any rate this healing is by far the best attested among all the accounts of the blind in the gospels" (5 : 63). Above all, what happened to revive the faith of the disciples after it had been destroyed by the crucifixion of Jesus? Every critic, though he may deny the resurrection, admits that the church from the outset believed it, since otherwise the existence of the church at all is inexplicable. And (2) the teachings of Jesus are often inseparable from miracles; *e. g.*, the discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum (John 6 : 26*f.*) pre-

supposes the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Such an utterance about the Sabbath as Mark 3 : 4 is hard to explain unless some miracle of mercy performed on that day had called forth the censure of the Pharisees. The story of the temptation in the wilderness—which originally was his own account of a profound spiritual experience—loses all its significance unless Jesus really supposed he had the power to work miracles, and here at the threshold of his public ministry was pondering on the problem how that power should be employed.

“On the whole,” says Gore, “miracles play so important a part in Christ’s scheme that any theory which would represent them as due entirely to the imagination of his followers or of a later age, destroys the credibility of the documents not partially but wholly, and leaves Christ a personage as mythical as Hercules” (“The Incarnation,” 54). Dr. Gore’s statement ends in exaggeration. Even without the gospels Jesus would be more than a mythical personage: the Christian Church, the Lord’s Supper, and the Lord’s Day bear witness to his historic existence. But without the gospels the story of his life and work would have to be reconstructed almost wholly by imagination: and, indeed, that is the way in which rationalistic writers do reconstruct it.

Most influential of all the factors that determine a critic’s use of the gospels as sources for a life of Christ, is his attitude toward the divinity of Jesus. It might



seem that since the gospels are practically the sole record of what he was or claimed to be, our opinion of the gospels would shape our opinion of Jesus: but in actual experience the reverse proves true. No one takes up the study of the gospels without some mental—not to say spiritual—bias for or against his divinity. This is created in part by the influences of childhood and early years; for life in a Christian land cannot be lived without some definite attitude toward the Founder of the Christian faith. But it is created even more by the system of philosophical thought accepted by a student. What we think about God and his attitude toward man, and about man himself and his spiritual needs and possibilities, will shape our whole opinion of the credibility of an incarnation, and therefore of the proofs that Jesus of Nazareth was God incarnate. The student of the gospels having thus already—consciously or unconsciously—framed an opinion concerning the divinity of Jesus, will be inclined to accept in them only those facts that confirm his opinion.

Though his miracles formerly were set forth as the first and chief proof that Jesus was divine, they are rarely used in this way now. In fact, their position has been almost completely reversed. Instead of saying "We believe that Jesus was divine because we know that he worked miracles," the defender of the Christian faith to-day says, "We believe that Jesus worked miracles because we know that he was divine."

And for the main proof of the divinity he points not only to his character as portrayed in the gospels (see p. 179), but also to his teachings concerning himself—in which would be included his attitude toward God and men. The sceptic, therefore, who has settled to his own satisfaction the matter of miracles, has still to meet the far more important evidence of the teachings of Jesus. And in his endeavor to explain away the statements of Jesus that seem to be proclamations of his divinity, he is not as ready as were his predecessors to pronounce the gospels late and worthless, and their record of Jesus' words pure fabrication. He recognizes the strength of the proofs that they, or their sources, are early, and reproduce the teachings of Jesus with, at least, a considerable degree of accuracy. He seeks accordingly some way by which the record may be accepted without admitting the divinity. One of these ways is so new and also just now so popular that a brief statement of it must be given.

The Revelation of St. John and the latter part of the Book of Daniel are examples of a special class of writings, called sometimes apocalyptical because they profess to unveil the future, and sometimes eschatological because they deal with events in the last days of the present age or eon. Mark 13 and other passages both in the New Testament and in the Old belong to the same class, as also do a number of uncanonical books, some of which have only recently been dis-

covered. Scholars are studying all these writings carefully, and through the increase of material are able to understand them better than in former days. They are highly valued, not because they reveal the future to us, but because they show what the general Jewish thought about the future was in the first century. For we know that apocalyptic books were very popular and influential in Palestine, and that from them were drawn the current ideas concerning the being and advent and work of the Messiah, and the nature of his Kingdom. In general their teaching was that in a time of stress and trial the Messiah would suddenly appear as a superhuman being, though not divine, who would crush all foes by his miraculous power, and set up a kingdom of marvellous plenty and glory.

Now when Jesus began his work—so the sceptic would say—he found himself everywhere confronted with these eschatological ideas and expectations, and, doubtless, to a large extent he shared them himself. Accordingly, when he undertook to teach his countrymen the simple but precious truths of the Kingdom of Heaven, he used increasingly the popular apocalyptic forms of thought concerning the Messianic Kingdom, and presently adopted the titles and claims of the apocalyptic Messiah. Whether the Messianic rôle was one he voluntarily assumed, or whether it was forced upon him by his followers, may be disputed; but in neither case did he really claim to be divine, for both

to him and to his Jewish followers such a claim would be blasphemous. What is meant by The Son of Man, which was his own favorite title, and The Son of God, which was the title others delighted to give him, can be understood only by studying their meaning in the apocalypses. And all his teachings about his present and future power and mission should be interpreted by the same means. Of course, the teachings in the gospel of John are to be rejected as a later development when these Jewish eschatological ideas came into contact with Greek thought.

To discuss this way of interpreting the teachings of Jesus about himself is beyond our present purpose. That apocalyptical ideas prevailed in his day, is undoubtedly true; and a recognition of that fact may throw new light upon his words and work. For example, the temptation in the wilderness becomes intelligible, if we bear in mind the popular expectation, gained from apocalypses, of how the Messiah would use his miraculous power. It was generally thought that when the Messiah appeared he would work miracles to accomplish at least three objects, (1) to prove beyond doubt that he was the Messiah, (2) to provide his followers abundantly with material, sensuous blessings, and (3) to overthrow his foes and seat himself upon the throne of universal empire. Out of Jesus' natural desire to draw men to himself arose the temptation to use his power as the Son of God to work



miracles that would meet these expectations. In symbolical form he describes it as the temptation (1) to descend from the pinnacle of the temple borne by angels, (2) to turn the very stones of the wilderness into bread for the hungry, and (3) to bow down to Satan. Such temptations confronted him not only at the outset but all through his ministry, and their origin was in the eschatological ideas that filled the minds of those who thronged about him wondering if he really could be the expected Messiah.

It is one thing, however, to recognize that in his work Jesus was constantly confronted with apocalyptical ideas, and quite another thing to hold that he shared or even adopted those ideas. For this latter opinion there is little evidence. When we consider the character of his ministry, the difficulty with which men grasped his teachings, the bitter opposition he aroused, and the slowness with which even the twelve recognized him to be the Messiah, it seems evident that he was far from fulfilling the popular Messianic expectations. And if the apocalyptical writings were the source of those expectations, they certainly cannot be used to explain the teachings of Jesus about himself.

In the use of the first three gospels for a life of Christ, a recognition of the synoptic problem and its generally accepted solution ought to bear fruit in various ways. For example, if these gospels make use of a common source, the fact that an incident is given



by all three does not increase its trustworthiness except as strengthening the evidence that it was in the common source and not added later. And if the details of an incident vary in the three, such variations are to be treated no longer as those of different eye-witnesses but as those of different writers using a common source. Above all, the common sources, if they can be restored, are the real authority. The synoptists used them—whether faithfully or not critics must determine: and certainly present day writers are as competent as the synoptists to quote their statements or arrange their facts. The difficulty, of course, is in recovering the sources; and, despite all toil of critics, the results thus far are indefinite—at least, they have borne little fruit in the lives of Christ. The biographer of Jesus who undertakes to go behind the synoptics does not differ very much from his brother of fifty years ago: he may make a far more elaborate display of scholarship, and talk much more about Ur Marcus and Q and *Evangelia infantia* and Jewish-Christian apocalypses, and the like; but when he comes to reconstruct the story, he usually follows pretty consistently his own prejudices for or against the miraculous and divine in deciding what to include and what to omit.

If the gospels are taken as trustworthy records, there still remains the problem how they are to be used. Two methods of treatment are possible. On the one hand they may be looked upon as brief biographies,

written from the stand-point of an historian. In this case, we construct from them a chronological outline, and fill this in with the various recorded events. There are evident gaps in the record, and there are sometimes apparent duplicates of events; what Jesus did, *e. g.*, in the period between his return from the two days' sojourn in Samaria and the beginning of his work in Galilee after John's imprisonment, must remain unknown, and whether he was rejected in Nazareth once or twice is an open question. But a careful study of the gospel record ought to result in a fairly definite and complete history which will trace the progress of Jesus step by step from the baptism to the ascension.

On the other hand, the gospels may be considered as memorabilia of what Jesus was and taught, preserved by the disciples for guidance in fashioning their own lives after his example, for light upon the truths most important in their thought, and for use in persuading others that he was indeed the Saviour of the world. If such is the character of the gospels, it is impossible to gain from them a chronological history; they do not contain it. As well try to gain a history of Socrates from Xenophon's "Memorabilia." Some chapters can be reconstructed: a general idea may be gained of the progress of events that led to the creation of apostolic faith and also to the culmination of Jewish hostility; but a biography of Jesus is beyond attainment. The most recent lives of Christ are fashioned according to

this view. Bossuet says: "We are no longer in a position to reconstruct an historical picture of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee, according to its chronological development; for the narrative of our gospels, with its prevailing timelessness and its frequent arrangement of the words and deeds of Jesus in a designedly material order, does not provide the means necessary for such a picture."

In this connection we may notice that recent lives of Christ devote much less space than formerly to descriptions of Palestinian life and thought in the first century—that which Garvie calls "the scenery, the upholstery and drapery of the life of Jesus." Unquestionably there was a close connection between Jesus and his environment: all modern critics recognize this. Those who see in him only a remarkable Galilean Jew of the first century declare that his surroundings, social, political, intellectual and religious, had large influence in fashioning his character and thought. Those who accept him as divine recognize that these surroundings necessarily shaped the immediate fashion of his teachings and his work. In either case a knowledge of his times is important for the study of his life. But the matter may be overdone. Bulky volumes crowded with minute and curious details of Palestinian life, drawn from all sources, do not set Jesus more clearly before us: they simply bewilder the reader and turn his thoughts away from the real subject of his

study. And the minor value of such details is well expressed by Garvie when he says, "An exaggerated importance is attached to a knowledge of contemporary custom and costume: even the ideas and ideals of his environment—important as a knowledge of these is—do not explain Jesus."

# APPENDIX

## LIVES OF CHRIST

### I

IN the Mediæval Age the human nature and life of Christ were largely ignored. Popular thought emphasized his divinity, and any attempt to portray the manner in which he lived as man among men would have seemed irreverent or even blasphemous. In their longing for one who had been tempted in all points like themselves and could be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, men turned to the Virgin and the saints. Lives of these were plenty and popular, but lives of Christ were almost lacking, and were largely poetical and legendary.

After the Reformation the main interest was in theology, and thought concerning Christ centred upon his work as Redeemer rather than upon his earthly history. Harmonies of the gospels were produced to explain seeming discrepancies in the sacred story, but the Lives of Christ were simple repetitions of the Scripture narrative for devotional purposes. A work by *Jeremy Taylor* (1635) was worthy of that great divine, and is still of value; but its character is well indicated by its title—"The Great Exemplar of Sanctity and Holy Life according to the Christian Institution; described in the History of the Life and Death of the Ever-Blessed Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the World; with Considerations and Discourses upon the several parts of the Story, and Prayers fitted to the several Mysteries." In 1767 *John Fleetwood* (probably a pseudonym) published a Life of Christ which became remarkably popular, passing through edition after edition in later years, and still on sale to-day. As a scholarly work the book has no value, but it ministered to a want which men were beginning to recognize, and for which there was as yet scanty provision.



Modern interest in the record of Christ's earthly years springs from many causes; but, as Fairbairn points out, the main one is "the growth of the historical spirit." That spirit, which has led us to explore so carefully and critically all records of the past, could not be content to scrutinize the other great characters of antiquity and "ignore the Supreme Person of history." Reverence might hold back the critical student for a season, but sooner or later he would proceed to apply historical methods of investigation to the question, What do we really know concerning Jesus of Nazareth? Who was he, and what did he do?

## II

Although the historical spirit had begun to develop, and Niebuhr and others were reconstructing in most radical fashion the history of Rome and of Greece, the immediate impulse that produced the book, initiating a new epoch in the study of the life of Christ, was philosophical rather than historical.

*Strauss* was a young professor at Tübingen, and an enthusiastic disciple of Hegel. In 1835 he published a Life of Jesus, which was translated in 1846 by Miss Evans, "George Eliot," from the fourth German edition. His aim was to use the principles of Hegelian philosophy in explanation of the Christian teachings concerning Jesus. God is not a Person; therefore, miracles are impossible. The full incarnation of God is not in any individual, but in Humanity. "Humanity is the child of the visible Mother and the invisible Father—of Nature and Spirit; it is the Miracle-worker, in so far as in the course of human history the Spirit becomes ever more perfectly the Master of Nature; it is the sinless, inasmuch as the process of its development is blameless—defilement cleaves to the individual, but is abolished in the species and its history; it is the One that dies, rises again, and ascends to heaven, since from the negation of its natural there proceeds always a higher spiritual life." These are the absolute truths that are wrought into the story of Jesus. The historical facts of his life, so far as we can recover them, are few and simple. He was reared in Nazareth, baptized by John, had disciples, went about teaching, introduced the Messianic kingdom, roused the hatred of the Pharisees, and was crucified.

The rest of the story, as told in the gospels, which were written late in the second century, is mythical. By a myth Strauss does not mean a deliberately invented falsehood; it is a story embodying popular theological and philosophical ideas, which is framed almost unconsciously by simple-hearted believers and incorporated in the history of the person to whom they feel it fitly belongs. The early Christians believed that Jesus was the Messiah (though Strauss fails to account for the rise of that belief), and so they took it for granted that he must have done whatever they supposed the Messiah would do. They had gained their Messianic ideas largely from the Old Testament; therefore, whatever they found there, they transferred to the life of Jesus. For example, they inferred from Isaiah 35 : 5-6 that when the Messiah came the eyes of the blind would be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed, etc., and so such miracles became part of their conception of the deeds of Jesus. Moreover, they supposed that all the wonderful incidents in the lives of the Old Testament saints must have been paralleled or surpassed in the life of the Messiah; so the shining of the face of Moses gave rise to the myth of the transfiguration on the mount; the feast of Elisha (II Kings 4 : 42*f.*) was magnified into the feeding of the five thousand; the ascension of Elijah suggested the ascension of Jesus, etc. Thus a large part of the supernatural incidents in the life of Jesus can readily be accounted for. As regards the rest, the myths are an attempt to express eternal verities concerning the union of God with man and its manifestations—verities which the Christian church perceived, but which were supposed to have been revealed in Jesus instead of in Humanity. These events in the life of Jesus should be interpreted, not as history, but as the picturesque thought of a simple age concerning the manifestation of the Spirit in the life of mankind.

This was the famous mythical theory of Strauss. He wrote his book, as he states in its preface, for theologians and not for the laity, and with the conviction that it would help rather than injure the Christian faith. Many years later, in 1864, he published another *Life of Jesus* (translated in 1865) more popular in form, in which he largely abandoned the mythical theory, and explained the gospel story as a deliberate falsehood of the early Christians. Finally, in his latest work, "The Old Faith and the

New," he rejected Christianity entirely, thus showing the legitimate result of his original undertaking.

The book by Strauss at once aroused much excitement, and brought upon him a storm of orthodox indignation. It called forth a host of replies, among which were two Lives of Christ deserving notice.

*Neander* was originally a Jew named David Mendel, and he took the name Neander ("a new man") when converted to Christianity. He was now a prominent church historian in Berlin, a man of great learning and piety. He answered Strauss by publishing in 1837 a Life of Christ, which was translated in 1848. It is keen and devout, accepting the four gospels and defending the miracles, but it is inclined to go as far as possible in yielding to the objections of sceptics in order to win them back from following Strauss. The book is valuable, but in many ways fails to meet the needs of the present day.

*Lange*, best known as a famous commentator, held at Zürich the chair of theology which would have been given to Strauss had he not roused the opposition of the orthodox. In 1844-7 he published a Life of Jesus (translated in 1864) which was his contribution to the controversy then waging. It is a voluminous work, devout in spirit and accepting all four gospels, but vague and fanciful in its treatment of Christ's divinity and its theory of the relation of miracles to natural law. The average reader will find himself wearied and befogged in its pages.

### III

A myth requires time for its development; therefore, if the gospels are full of myths, they must have been written far down in the second century. Strauss in his first work simply took the late date for granted, thereby leaving the weakest point in his theory undefended. But a group of scholars, like him Hegelian in their philosophy and desirous of explaining the origin of Christianity by purely natural causes, soon undertook the task he had slighted.

The *Tübingen School* is the name given to this group because its leader, *Ferdinand Christian Baur*, was professor at Tübingen, and there gathered around him many brilliant younger men as



his disciples and supporters. In their opinion Christianity at the beginning was simply one form of Judaism with Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. Paul was the first to develop the broader view that Jesus is the Messiah of the whole world, and that Christianity is wholly distinct from Judaism. Thereupon arose a bitter and prolonged conflict between the two parties—the Jewish form of Christianity fiercely opposing the Pauline. Later on, the two were reconciled; and still later the fact that there had ever been a conflict was covered up. In this way the Tübingen School explained Christianity as a purely natural evolution according to the regular Hegelian process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis—position, opposition, and reconciliation. Accepting this view, they had a test by which to determine the date of New Testament writings. Books that show the conflict in actual existence—in particular, Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans for the Pauline side, and Revelation for the Jewish—belong to the Apostolic Age; books conciliatory in spirit, and striving to promote harmony by showing real agreement underneath seeming differences, are post-apostolic; books which ignore the conflict altogether are late in the second century. Applying this test to the gospels, John is found to be neither Jewish nor Pauline, but wholly Catholic—before it was written the conflict had ceased and been forgotten; the other three gospels are conciliatory, Matthew being written from the Jewish stand-point and Luke from the Pauline, while Mark is chiefly a compilation from the other two. John, therefore, must have been written so late in the second century as to be worthless historically; the synoptics must be placed earlier in that century, and are imperfectly trustworthy, Matthew being the earliest and most reliable. In making use of the gospels we must not treat them as books of history, but rather as *Tendenz Schriften*—writings shaped by party feelings—and we must bear in mind the special object of each writer and the late date at which he wrote.

The Tübingen School produced no *Life of Jesus*, but set forth its conception of his life in works on Paul and the Apostolic Age, of which Baur's *Paul* (1845, translated in 1875) and *Church History of the First Three Centuries* (1853, translated in 1879) were the beginning. It now has few if any followers, because careful study has shown that the New Testament books were written at

an earlier date than would be consistent with its theory. Undoubtedly there was a struggle in the apostolic church between the Jewish and the Gentile parties concerning the Law and the freedom wherewith Christ had set them free; but it was neither so long and wide-spread nor so dominant over all church life as the Tübingen theory supposes. But the Tübingen School for a season exerted a strong influence, felt by every writer upon the life of Christ; and it rendered one lasting and valuable service—henceforth no writer could ignore the problem of the date and origin of the gospels.

*Ewald*, a most learned Oriental scholar at Göttingen, devoted the fifth volume of his great work on the History of Israel to the life and times of Christ (1854, translated in 1865). He was strongly opposed to Baur, and accepted all four gospels as written in the Apostolic Age, ably defending John as the work of the apostle. As regards miracles he is Left Centre, for, while he believes Jesus to be “the sole, unfailing instrument of the salvation of this world,” he rejects the virgin birth, and sees in him simply a human being elevated to a unique and perfect union with God, and in his miracles a revelation of what the spirit of man thus elevated can accomplish. The life of Christ is the culmination of the religious history of the Jews—the full revelation of God to man. Jesus combined in himself all the prophetic, priestly, and kingly power that had previously been exhibited in Israel; “thus he became the Son of God as no one hitherto had been—in a mortal body and in a fleeting space of time the purest and most perfect image of the Eternal Himself; thus he became the Word of God, speaking from God by his human word no less than by his whole appearing and work; and thus the one, true Messiah, the undying King of the Kingdom of God which was in him first attaining its perfection amongst men—the one man to whom as Guide and Lord every one must constantly look up and aspire.” The book is by no means easy reading, and Ewald is stronger in Old Testament study than in New.



## IV

According to the theories of Strauss and Baur, the part which Jesus played in the origin of Christianity was really an insignificant one. Almost any high-minded, earnest teacher might have given the feeble initial impulse that set the Christian church in motion, and have served as the figure around which the later conceptions of a divine founder were to cluster. Indeed, instead of recognizing that Jesus created Christianity, these writers practically maintain the exact opposite—that Christianity created Jesus; for, without the later additions to his story, he remains a shade as thin and unsubstantial as that described in Arthur Clough's poem, "The Shadow."

*Renan*, the brilliant French Semitic scholar, saw this fundamental mistake, and set himself to correct it. "History is not a simple play of abstractions; in it men are more than doctrines": hence all attempts to explain the origin of Christianity by philosophical principles and tendencies and parties and conflicts, apart from the creative personality of its Founder, are doomed to failure. Accordingly, Renan in his "*Vie de Jésus*" undertook to present Jesus as "a man of great religious genius who, through his daring originality and the love he had the gift of inspiring, became the object and fixed the point of departure of the future faith of humanity." The book was published in 1863, and at once aroused so much attention that its publication was called one of the events of the century. Eleven editions were exhausted within six months, and it was translated into English the same year.

Some of its great popularity was due to the charm of its literary style, so unlike the heavy, tedious chapters of the German writers; but what attracted readers still more powerfully was its novel and vivid picture of Jesus. Renan rejected the supernatural entirely, declaring that "miracles are things that never happen": though the gospel story is full of them, they are to be treated as simply legends which, after the death of Jesus, grew up rapidly in an age of childish credulity. Having thus contemptuously cast away a large part of what the evangelists record, he treated the rest of their narrative with the utmost liberty, reconstructing the history according to his own theories and fancy. Jesus was a pure, high-minded Galilean peasant upon whom had

dawned the mighty truth that God is our Father. He gathered about him a little band of disciples, drawn by the charm of his presence and the novelty of his teaching; and these he taught to live in simplicity and joyousness as children of the Father. Presently he came under the influence of John the Baptist, an influence which on the whole was harmful, since through it he was led to believe that his mission was that of a universal reformer, and that the Kingdom of God must be introduced by an overthrow of existing conditions. His disciples increased rapidly after the imprisonment of John, and, because they believed him to be the Messiah, he was forced against his will into an attempt to fulfil Messianic expectations. He had to make claims that he knew were unfounded, and in support of them he had to adopt or, at least, to acquiesce in fraud and sham miracles. His career grew more fanatical and desperate until, when he was put to death, "it was time for death to relax the tension of a situation strained to the utmost—to remove him from the impossibilities of a path that had no issue." Had he died in the first period of his career, "there would not have been in his life a single page that could wound us"; but, as it was, we often have to make excuses, to confess that "he adopted, because they were popular, many things with which he did not agree," and "sometimes one might have said that his reason was unbalanced." The book abounds in professions of deepest admiration, and closes with the statement, "Whatever unlooked-for events the future may have in store, Jesus will never be surpassed; his worship will unceasingly renew its youth; his story will call forth endless tears; his sufferings will subdue the noblest hearts; all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men no one has been born who is greater than he." And yet it repeatedly describes Jesus as doing things that shock a keen moral sense, though the writer does not always seem to realize that they are shocking. When the multitude at Jerusalem were discussing Jesus, "some said, He is a good man; others said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people" (John 7 : 12); Renan would combine both opinions as if they were not contradictory. Of the book, Weiss says very properly, "It is not history, but a romance," and H. B. Smith adds, "It can not be read without the risk of marring the moral sense."

*Pressensé*, a French clergyman and author, in 1865 published

his "Jésus Christ, son Temps, sa Vie, son Œuvre," as an answer to Renan. Though somewhat florid in style, it is a full, clear, and orthodox life of Christ, accepting the gospel record and defending the miracles. At the time it was, perhaps, the best book on the subject from an orthodox stand-point, and it passed through many editions. Though translated into English in 1866, it has not been widely circulated here because we have other Lives of Christ of the same character written with equal or greater ability.

## V

Though the attempt of Renan to explain the origin and character of Christianity through the influence and teachings of its Founder was far from successful, it opened a line of study which has been followed with great profit in late years. What was the secret of the influence of Jesus? What was the aim that he had in view when establishing the Kingdom of God? What were the methods and the laws he laid down for his followers? Questions like these, when once forced upon men's attention, are too interesting and profitable to be left unanswered.

"*Ecce Homo*" was an attempt to answer them. The book was published anonymously in 1866, and the secret was kept for many years that its author was J. R. Seeley, who later was an eminent professor of modern history at Cambridge, England. In his preface he says that he had been led to the study of his subject, "because, after reading a good many books on Christ, he felt still constrained to confess that there was no historical character whose motives, objects, and feelings remained so incomprehensible to him"; and what he has written is an endeavor "to furnish an answer to the question, What was Christ's object in founding the Society which is called by his name, and how is it adapted to attain that object?" For his purpose only the general outlines of the life of Christ are necessary, and these he takes without question from the gospels; also he recognizes that "the fact that Jesus appeared as a worker of miracles is the best attested fact in his whole biography." The book, as the title indicates, confines itself to the human side of Christ, and considers in detail the call he gave to his disciples and the legislation he gave to his Society. A second volume, in which the divine side of Christ

and his personal relations as Judge and Master to all men should be discussed, was promised, but never written. "It was a fresh and powerful book; it went, as it were, unweakened by metaphysical or critical hesitations, straight to the moral heart of the matter, and asked the meaning of the person and message and society of Jesus" (Fairbairn). F. G. Peabody says of it: "The extraordinary insight of this book into the spirit of the gospels, and its beauty and vigor of expression make its publication an epoch in the interpretation of the teaching of Jesus." Modern study of the social and ethical teachings of Jesus, which is constantly increasing, may be said to date from its appearance. Of course, the restriction of the discussion to the human side of Jesus made the book—reverent though it was and wholly unlike Renan in moral tone—seem to many a pitifully inadequate picture of the Godman; and it aroused much criticism and many replies, among them the "Ecce Deus," 1868, of *Joseph Parker*, a prominent London preacher.

## VI

Another result of Renan's work was to make students recognize the importance of a careful investigation of the environment in which Jesus lived and labored. Renan in his introduction describes his surprise at the light upon the life of Jesus which was gained by a sojourn in Palestine: "before my eyes I had a fifth gospel, torn, but still legible; and from that time, through the narratives of Matthew and Mark, I saw, instead of an abstract being who might be said never to have existed, an admirable human figure living and moving." And in his book Renan had endeavored to follow the rule which he himself lays down—"The first task of the historian is to sketch well the environment in which the events he relates took place." Of course, if Jesus was simply a man, the influences that surrounded him go far toward explaining his career; and if we recognize his divinity, still we must approach it, as did the first disciples, by first becoming acquainted with his humanity as displayed under special conditions of race and age and thought. In no case can we ignore the land and the times in which Jesus lived.

*Keim*, professor of historical theology at Zürich, gave us the



first of the great environmental biographies in his "History of Jesus of Nazara in its Connection with the National Life of His People." It appeared in three large volumes in 1867-72 with an English translation in six volumes, 1873-83. It is full and admirable in its treatment of all the facts of Jewish life and thought that bear upon its subject. Keim, like Renan, also sees that "no religion depends upon the person of its founder so fully as the Christian religion: in other instances faith is based chiefly on the founder's teachings, but here rather upon a life in which men have found not merely a voice from heaven but a divine advent." In his use of the gospels he rejects John entirely, and gives preference to Matthew as the earliest of the synoptics, written about A. D. 68. On miracles he is Left Centre, rejecting all the nature miracles, and holding that the cures wrought by Jesus were by the action of spirit upon spirit—the product of high spiritual life and intense sympathy on the part of Jesus, and of faith in him on the part of the sufferer. While he denies the bodily resurrection of Jesus, he ably refutes the theories of earlier sceptics, and holds that there was granted to the sorrowing disciples a spiritual vision of their living Lord—"a telegram from heaven"—to assure them that he had conquered death. Keim was unwilling to accept the orthodox view of the divinity of Christ; yet he was deeply impressed with the sublimity of his life "which makes the impression of mysterious loneliness, superhuman miracle, divine creation." Dr. S. M. Jackson says of his book: "Nothing like it had hitherto appeared. Immense learning, tireless energy, nervous force, deep convictions, cautious judgment, reverence—these united give the work a lasting importance. It was and remains the Life of Jesus from a rationalistic stand-point."

*Fouard*, professor of theology in Rouen, wrote in 1879 a Life of Jesus (translated in 1890), which is interesting as being the work of a Roman Catholic abbé. Naturally, he gives a place in it to the traditions handed down by the church, and interprets certain sayings of Jesus from the Roman Catholic stand-point; but there is little in it to distinguish it from similar works by devout, orthodox Protestants. It is the production of a scholar, and is written in an easy, attractive style.



## VII

Continued study of the dates for the gospels slowly forced back the Tübingen School until scholars generally agreed that the synoptics must have been written in the first century and that John could not be later than the opening years of the second century. If so, they were written in the lifetime of either the apostles themselves or of those who were the immediate disciples of the apostles; and the objection that they are too late to be trustworthy is overthrown. But, with this problem out of the way, others took its place. The most important were the Synoptic Problem and the Johannine Problem. Neither of these was new; but they now began to push to the front, where they remain till the present day. Any critical Life of Christ has to take them up, and to determine, not merely whether our four gospels are of early date, but what are the sources, if any, that lie behind them and give the story of Jesus as it was originally told.

*Weiss*, professor of theology at Berlin, published in 1882 a Life of Christ (translated in three volumes in 1883-84) in which these problems and their bearing on the history of Jesus are clearly recognized. He regards John as more trustworthy than the synoptics, or at least as correcting them in certain instances. He also adopts one form of the "double source" or "two-document" theory of the origin of the synoptics. This theory in one form or another is largely accepted to-day, and Weiss should be studied as an introduction to it. His book was a reply to Keim, and is able and suggestive. As to miracles, he is Right Centre, holding that Christ wrought true miracles and rose from the dead, but he is inclined to rationalistic explanations when possible. For example, the feeding of the five thousand may have been nothing more than "a miracle of providence" by which, in some purely natural though unexplained way, the food was divinely supplied at the precise hour of need. The book is one for careful study rather than for popular reading; but it well repays the time spent upon it. For Weiss is one of the greatest of critics and exegetes, and his spiritual insight is profound. Dr. Sanday's advice that a student of the life of Jesus should take Weiss as his principal commentary would be endorsed even by those who are unable to accept all its conclusions.

## VIII

The works we have thus far considered, much as they differ, all agree that our opinion of Christ must depend upon the historical facts of his life and upon our philosophical attitude toward the supernatural. But in the last quarter of a century a new school of theology has developed—called Ritschlianism, from its founder, Albrecht Ritschl—which seeks to make religion entirely independent of science and metaphysics by confining one to the realm of faith and the other to the realm of knowledge. For example, concerning any fact we may ask, what evidence is there for it? and what explanation can be given for it?—these are questions of science and philosophy; or we may ask, what is its moral value? and what does it signify to us as spiritual beings?—these are questions of religion. The answers in the one instance should not, according to Ritschlianism, at all affect the answers in the other. Science may refuse to accept an event as a miracle because natural causes for it can be discovered; nevertheless religion may treat it as miraculous because it has the practical value of a miracle. Philosophy may be unable to accept the divinity of Christ because it involves an incredible union of God and man; but religion, ignoring such perplexity of metaphysical thought, may still recognize his divinity because he has for men the practical value of God incarnate.

Such an attempt to combine doubt and faith, scepticism and belief, is, to say the least, somewhat bewildering to the ordinary man; and yet it has greatly attracted some of the keen thinkers of the present day. We see its influence in Harnack, whose “What is Christianity?” has been widely read; and in Wendt, whose book on the Teaching of Jesus is a remarkably able one. And we have a Life of Christ written from the Ritschlian standpoint.

*Stapfer*, professor of theology in Paris, gives us this in “Jesus Christ, His Person, His Authority, His Work,” published in 1895–6 and translated soon after. In his treatment of the sources he accepts the “two-document” theory concerning the synoptics, and regards John as the recollections of the apostle, written down by some disciple, perhaps under his personal supervision. The work is divided into three parts.

Part I treats of Jesus Christ before his ministry. Jesus was a man of his time, and received the ordinary training of a Jewish youth, which is minutely described. In his thought he accepted the best that there was in the teachings of both the Pharisees and the Essenes. His originality consisted in "a very clear and full consciousness of a union with God, which nothing in the past had ever troubled, and which nothing troubled in the present." Like all Jews, he was expecting the Messiah, and the question, what if I were the Messiah? often presented itself to him. The influence of John the Baptist over him was strong, and led him to baptism, where he received the Messianic consciousness. He began his public work in accordance with popular Messianic conceptions, in which John shared; but after a time, through an inner experience indicated by the story of the temptation in the wilderness, he rose above this ideal to a higher one.

Part II treats of Jesus Christ during his ministry. The subject is discussed topically, and no clear idea is given of the particular events or of the course and development of the ministry. One chapter is devoted to a discussion of the miracles. They were no part of the Messianic work, but belonged simply to Christ's vocation as a rabbi, since one work of a rabbi was to cure diseases and cast out demons. Whether Stapfer regards them as supernatural or not, it is hard to say; for on the one hand he lays down the axiom, "the laws of nature are inviolable," hence it follows that the so-called miracle, if it really took place, can only be something which lies outside of the present known forces of nature; yet on the other hand he says, "By prayer one acts upon God, and through Him upon nature itself; this is why Jesus certainly performed true miracles, and did it often; for God certainly gave him the answer to his prayers."

Part III, which is the largest of the three, treats of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Up to the very hour of his arrest, though he saw the dangers thickening about him, Jesus hoped to escape death; and the betrayal by Judas was a surprise to him. Yet he died with the assurance that his cause would triumph even by means of his death. As to the resurrection, there were spiritual appearances to the disciples, but no resurrection of the body, though how the tomb became empty we cannot say. Really what took place on the third day we never can

know, and it is a matter of little importance; concerning the resurrection "the true believer has no need of historic proofs; he has intuitions of heart and conscience, and those eternal reasons which lie in the depths of his soul, and which the abstract reason knows not of." This is a typical Ritschlian conclusion.

## IX

Two other lives of Jesus, both written in German but accessible in translation, may be briefly described.

*Holtzmann*, professor at Giessen, published a Life of Jesus in 1901. He holds the "two-document" theory concerning the synoptics, and finds in John little of historical value. The Gospel of the Hebrews he considers as "on the whole similar to our synoptic gospels, but at the same time completely independent of them, while yet possessed of an equal value"; and he makes all possible use of it. He thinks the duration of the ministry "cannot be reliably fixed," but inclines to one year and some months. Jesus was born at Nazareth, and the stories that cluster around Bethlehem are unhistorical. He grew up conscious of no sinful action, yet consented to be baptized by John because he might have sinned unconsciously. (As a matter of fact, in later life he does display occasional bursts of ill temper; *e.g.*, in his treatment of the Syrophœnician woman and his cursing of the fig tree.) In a spiritual vision at the baptism he gains the Messianic consciousness and at the same time the Holy Spirit endows him with Messianic attributes. At a comparatively early stage of his ministry he foresees by purely human wisdom that death is the inevitable end; but he nobly labors on in sublime confidence that his labors will not be in vain. As to miracles, Holtzmann is Left Centre. The healings were the effect of mind upon mind; the nature miracles were in some instances "remarkable coincidences," in others exaggerations or poetical accounts of natural events. There was no resurrection. The tomb was empty because Joseph of Arimathæa had quietly removed the body, not wishing "to permit a crucified man to lie permanently beside the dead of his own family." The disciples were expecting Jesus to rise on the third day, *i. e.*, in a very short time; hence in Galilee Peter first and then the others had visions of the risen Lord.



"The formula which sums up the historical significance of Jesus Christ's appearance is this: the highest moral end in life combined with the joyful assurance of eternal salvation." Evidently the book is not at all an advance upon Renan, and it lacks the literary charms of that popular writer.

*Bossuet*, professor of theology at Göttingen, in his "Jesus" (1904, translated in 1906), reminds us in style and thought still more strongly of Renan, though his attitude is more serious and reverent. He does not attempt to construct a narrative life of Jesus, for which he holds that the gospels do not provide the necessary means; but he gives us a study of his work, teachings, and person. The son of Joseph as well as of Mary, performing no miracles, but only works of healing, "entirely within the bounds of the psychologically conceivable," looking forward to his death as no more sacrificial than that of any martyr for the truth, he "never overstepped the limits of the purely human." He did appropriate to himself the Messianic expectation, because he was confident that the Kingdom of God was at hand, and "according to the popular ideal this was inconceivable without the Messiah." Yet he did this reluctantly. "The Messianic idea was the only possible form in which Jesus could clothe his inner consciousness, and yet an inadequate form; it was a necessity, but also a heavy burden which he bore in silence almost to the end of his life; it was a conviction which he could never enjoy with a whole heart." The uniqueness of Jesus and the secret of his life and work lay in the fact that he "felt that he stood in such closeness of communion with God the Father as belonged to none before or after him. He was conscious of speaking the last and decisive word. He felt that what he did was final, and that none would come after him." But if this be so, we are left in perplexity as to how it can be true that Jesus "never overstepped the limits of the purely human."

## X

Translation is a winnowing process, so that Lives of Christ which have been translated may be reckoned among the best of the foreign works. When we turn to works by English writers we must ourselves make the selection from a large number, some



of which are of slight value, though no book upon such an important subject can be wholly valueless. Many are the work of busy pastors—the outgrowth, perhaps, of a series of sermons—and, while not lacking in scholarship, their aim is chiefly devotional. Such, for example, are *Lives* by Beecher, Crosby, Deems, Eddy, Hanna. They are not intended for the student, and may be omitted from our list.

Almost without exception the English lives are written from an orthodox stand-point, using all four of the gospels as reliable sources, recognizing the divinity of Jesus, and taking the Right as their position on miracles. Having so much in common, they need no detailed description. We mention only the more important in chronological order.

*Ellicott*, afterward Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, gave as the Hulsean Lectures at Cambridge in 1859 a course on the life of Christ. This was published with voluminous notes. The lectures are rhetorical and diffuse, but the notes are compact, keen, and scholarly, and, though written half a century ago, are still valuable.

*Andrews* (1862, new edition thoroughly revised, 1891) confines himself to chronological, topographical, and historical details, discussing their problems with great minuteness. In this field his work has no equal, and is indispensable for the student. His divisions of the ministry, with a statement of the leading purpose and general character of each division, are suggestive and helpful. These and the other more important parts of the book are distinguished by the use of a larger type.

*Abbott* (1869) aims “to give the life and teachings of Christ that significance which is afforded by a knowledge of his times and circumstances—to present the life of Christ in its appropriate setting.” At the time it was written this was a valuable work; but the later environmental *Lives* have largely superseded it, and the book is out of print.

*Farrar* (1874) designed his book for popular reading, and it certainly has attained its object, having been more widely circulated than any other English *Life of Christ*. It is diffuse in style and marred by attempts at fine writing. In this book and “*The Life of St. Paul*” and “*The Early Days of Christianity*” he covers the whole of New Testament times. In popularity the

three books stand in the order above given, which is the order of their publication, but in scholarly worth they stand in exactly the reverse order.

*Geikie* (1877) gives another popular Life written along the same lines as that by Farrar. He has brought together in a huge and indiscriminate mass all the information that he could gather concerning the environment; and we are overwhelmed by it, and sometimes almost lose sight of the central figure. He also presents in diffuse paraphrase all of Christ's teachings. The book would be greatly improved by selection and condensation.

*Stalker* (1879) wrote his Life as one of a series of hand-books for Bible classes. His endeavor was "to throw into prominence the great masses of our Lord's life, and point out clearly its hinge events, details being as much as possible curtailed." He has succeeded admirably, and his little book gives a clear and interesting outline which every student will find of great value at the outset of his studies. It is the book for a beginner.

*Edersheim* (1883) is probably the best of the popular writers. He was reared as a Jew, and is therefore familiar with the details of Jewish life and the lore of the Talmud, both of which he uses to illustrate his subject. Though somewhat mystical, he is very helpful in his reverent interpretation of Christ's words and deeds. His book is one which all general readers should own.

*Fairbairn* (1889), in his "Studies in the Life of Christ," takes only the leading topics, and has in mind the needs of the scholar. Though prepared originally as a series of pulpit discourses, it ranks among the most thoughtful and suggestive of English works and will well repay careful study. It should be better known.

*Gilbert* (1896, new edition largely rewritten, 1900) fitly describes his book by calling it "The Student's Life of Jesus." It is a well-arranged text-book, taking up in detail the incidents in Christ's life (the teachings are reserved for his later work, "The Revelation of Jesus"), and discussing them with frank recognition of sceptical objections and with able defence of orthodox conclusions. It needs to be supplemented by some work which gives the environment and brings out more clearly the divisions and progress of Christ's ministry.

*Rhees* (1900) gives us another text-book which in method is the exact opposite of Gilbert. Without discussing separate incidents

minutely, he offers a broad view of the historical setting and progress of Christ's life, and the problems it presents. Gilbert and Rhees taken together make an excellent combination for the student's purpose.

*Dawson* (1901) states that his object is "to depict the human life of Jesus as it appeared to his contemporaries, with a purposed negligence, as far as it is possible, of the vexed problems of theology and metaphysics." He rearranges events with great freedom and, though recognizing the miraculous in Christ's life, minimizes it as much as possible. The book is graphically written, but its attitude will hardly please either the devout or the sceptical.

*Sanday* (1905) is the writer of the article on Jesus Christ in "Hastings's Bible Dictionary," and this article has been reprinted as a separate volume with the title "Outlines of the Life of Christ." It is a very able production, replete with the latest scholarship, and it makes us look forward eagerly to the larger work on the same subject in preparation by the author. The average reader will probably find the book too condensed and presupposing too much familiarity with its subject; but the student who is prepared to profit by it will be charmed with its fresh, stimulating and broad treatment of the problems it discusses.

*Smith* (1905), under the title "The Days of His Flesh," treats the life of Jesus along the lines of Edersheim and Farrar, but with much freshness and occasional fancifulness. He prefaces his work with a discussion of the sources, in which he makes the synoptics depend upon the oral tradition rather than upon any earlier documents. The book is an excellent one for the general reader.

*Schmidt* (1905), in "The Prophet of Nazareth," discusses many topics that bear upon the origin of the belief, which he rejects, that Jesus was divine, but devotes only one chapter to an account of the life of Jesus as it may be constructed after discarding all the supernatural. The book is intended for students rather than for popular use, and is the ablest work from a rationalistic standpoint that has been put forth by an English or American author.

*Garvie* (1907) says of his "Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus": "The title indicates the purpose and the method of the book. It is the mind, heart, and will of Jesus as revealed in his words and work that the writer seeks to understand." It is a very careful and illuminating treatment of the questions that arise in connec-

tion with the chief points in Christ's ministry. The student who has made himself familiar with the details of Jesus' life, and wishes to go further and study their full significance will find this book most helpful and suggestive. It is the work of a scholar who recognizes present-day problems and sets himself sympathetically to aid those who are seeking their solution. The critical introduction, discussing the value of the sources, is also to be commended.

## XI

"To write the Life of Christ ideally is impossible. And even to write such a Life as should justify itself either for popular use or for study is a task of extreme difficulty." So says Sanday at the close of his *Outlines*, and he adds: "Great as are the merits of these modern works, there is none (at least none known to the writer) which possesses such a balance and combination of qualities as to rise quite to the level of a classic." Our review of the literature shows that his opinion is well-founded. The demands which a Life of Christ makes upon its author are greater than we can hope to have met by any one man. He must be a profound scholar, a keen critic, an unbiased judge, a master of literary style, and, above all, an earnest, reverent disciple of the Master: the Christ of history is best known through the Christ of personal experience.

"Taken as a whole," says Fairbairn, "though it is a whole that admits remarkable rather than weighty exceptions—we may say that the more recent Lives are distinguished by a growing sense of being on firm historical ground, and of using sources that the more they are critically handled can be the more intelligently trusted." This is a great gain, and encourages us to look forward with hopefulness to works yet to be produced. There never was a time when the life of Christ was more eagerly and enthusiastically studied, and when a work upon that subject reached as large a body of careful readers. And though the ideal Life may never be written, we can confidently expect that the present century will give us something better than the past has ever produced. To forecast its form is impossible, but everything indicates that its conclusions concerning the Founder of our religion will be in harmony with the story of the evangelists and the faith of the Christian church.



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